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ABSTRACT

This report presents the evaluations of 20 rural school/community collaborative projects supported by the Center for School Change between 1997 and 2000. The report is divided into four sections: an overview, a description of the shape of school/community collaborations, a discussion of the outcomes of school/community collaboration, and a conclusion. Many of the projects in the program operated in the midst of decades-long population declines or below-average growth. The evaluations revealed that teachers, principals, and community members who were confronted with these obstacles solved many practical problems to put their ideas of community-based education into operation. Those who succeeded showed themselves to be skilled at dealing with ambiguity and complexity, to be flexible in the face of unforeseen obstacles and opportunities, and to be adept at working with adults, as well as children. These school leaders demonstrated how carefully developed collaborative efforts can achieve meaningful benefits for students, schools, and the broader community. Many community leaders became convinced that these projects deepened the pool of future civic leaders, business operators, and workers for their communities. The report recommends time and patience when building school/community collaboration, advising schools to start small and to secure strong, supportive leadership from principals and superintendents. Appended are: Evaluation Instruments; Student Writing Assessments; and Academic Assessment Summaries. (RJM)

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Strengthening Schools and Communities through Collaboration

Final Evaluation Report on School/Community Collaboration in the Center for School Change's Phase II Grant Sites, 1997-2000

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Strengthening Schools and Communities through Collaboration

Final Evaluation Report on School/Community Collaboration in the Center for School Change's Phase II Grant Sites, 1997-2000

Prepared for

Center for School Change

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Strengthening Schools and Communities Through Collaboration

Table of Contents

STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH COLLABORATION: EVALUATION SUMMARY 1

EVALUATION OF STUDENT WRITING 4

CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE SUMMARY OF 1999-2000 STANDARDIZED TEST ANALYSIS 5

I. INTRODUCTION 6
- Overview of Center for School Change's Phase II Work 6
- Evaluation of School/Community Collaboration 8
- Guide to This Report 11

II. THE SHAPE OF SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION 13
- Community Involvement in Education 13
- Leadership and Governance 18
- Shared Facilities and Resources 19
- Difficulties in School/Community Collaboration 21

III. OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION 24
- Outcomes for the Community 24
- Outcomes for the School System 27
- Outcomes for Students 28

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 31

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 35

APPENDIX B: STUDENT WRITING ASSESSMENTS 43

APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT SUMMARIES 70

STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH COLLABORATION: EVALUATION SUMMARY

Rainbow Research evaluated the community engagement and community impact dimensions of 20 rural school/community collaborative projects supported by the Center for School Change(CSC) between 1997 and 2000. The CSC work was supported by major grants from the Annenberg and Blandin Foundations. We conducted site visits to 10 sites, including multiple visits to five sites, and analyzed survey data from parents, teachers, students and administrators at multiple sites.

We found these to be an inspiring network of innovative projects. Our core conclusion is that carefully developed collaborative efforts can achieve meaningful benefits for students, schools and the broader community. These projects are:

- bringing community resources into schools,
- connecting students and schools to their communities,
- building community pride in students and communities alike,
- making school facilities more accessible to community use, and
- pooling resources to create facilities and programs that benefit both schools and community.

Many community leaders interviewed believe these projects are helping to build the pool of future civic leaders, business operators and workers for their communities. Students' civic leadership skills are developed through project-based learning that exercises teamwork, goal-setting, project planning and follow-through, listening and interpersonal communication, and public speaking.

In some communities, benefits were further enhanced by partnership with the Center for Reducing Rural Violence.

Most of these projects operate against a backdrop of decades-long population decline or below-average growth, and economic disparities between metropolitan and Greater Minnesota. These school/community partnerships are fighting the widespread assumption that the best way to get ahead is to get out, that you can't get up unless you get away from your small town origins. In addition to this fundamental challenge, we found many barriers to this kind of educational innovation:

- These projects involved numerous players with diverse interests and temperaments. Generating a shared vision was not easy.
- Conflicting schedules for diverse participants and logistical difficulties of off-campus learning added practical difficulties.
- Many school staff, busy or satisfied with their current approach, did not want to change, a view shared by many community adults comfortable with traditional school routines. Engaging in innovation, especially with community-based

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approaches, sometimes triggered resistance from professional colleagues and community traditionalists.

- In projects with a context of shrinking population, economic base and school enrollment, innovations had to persevere through widespread grief and scarcity.

In the face of these obstacles, most teachers, principals, and community members playing leading roles in these projects were visionary, resourceful and tenacious. They solved myriad practical problems to put their ideas of community-based education into operation. We found that leaders of successful school/community collaborative projects had these characteristics:

- Skilled at dealing with ambiguity and complexity.
- Flexible in the face of unforeseen obstacles and opportunities.
- Skilled at working with adults as well as children, and in teams as well as independently.
- Possessing a rich network of community contacts which they actively nurtured.

Fortunately, we saw that once the basics of a collaborative system were established, the approach became easier as informal networks attracted more participants and existing roles and projects became models for further collaboration.

We recommend that future efforts at school/community collaboration bear in mind the following lessons:

1) **Time and patience are required to build the relationships necessary for strong school/community collaboration.** Projects typically underestimated the amount of time and attention required to build strong ownership, trust and participation by diverse stakeholders.
2) **Innovation and collaboration live in creative tension in these projects**. The best projects allowed creative innovators to put new ideas into action quickly and built broader ownership and stability through appropriate oversight, governance, and ongoing information sharing. Typically this meant forming a broad-based steering committee and giving core teachers freedom to innovate.
3) **Strong, supportive leadership by principals and superintendents contributes to success.** Determined teachers and citizens made progress without supportive school administrators in some sites, but had more difficulty. The most effective administrators viewed their role as far more than simply getting out of the way of innovation. Principals and superintendents can make valuable contributions by running interference with resistant individuals and policies within the school system, brokering connections and boosting understanding of the new approach in the community, and providing professional validation to the front-line innovative teachers.
4) **Starting small, with a single school or "school-within-a-school," may be best for generating momentum for school/community collaboration.** Focusing on one or a few do-able collaborative projects can make the most of limited initial energy. The working examples generated then become powerful teaching tools for moving the public dialogue on this topic, both in the community and within the

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school system. Some of the strongest projects had a single school, or a program within a school that involved a handful of teachers, at their core. Even successful K-12 ventures had a few "flagship" community partnership projects.

5) **Communities possess deep resources for leadership and teaching; the challenge is on educators to connect with these.** Projects thrived when they had active community leadership that provided vision to persevere through the practical and bureaucratic difficulties, and when they enlivened students' learning experiences through involvement of knowledgeable community members and topics. Teachers and administrators, as the people with day-to-day responsibility for guiding student learning, have the most power to tap or block these community resources.

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EVALUATION OF STUDENT WRITING

By David Evertz

Strong evidence of positive student writing outcomes was shown in an independent evaluation of student writing samples from the Fertile-Beltrami, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo, and Perham schools for the 1999-2000 school year. The question addressed in the evaluation was: is there evidence of improvement in the student writing? A spring and fall writing sample was collected from each student included in the study from Fertile-Beltrami (536 samples), and Warren-Alvarado-Oslo (46 samples), while fall, winter and spring samples were collected from Perham students (120 samples). Each sample was read a minimum of two times and scored using the Writing Rubric in use at each school. This use of the rubric was to ensure student outcomes were measured against stated teaching objectives.

Significant improvement between the fall and later writing samples is evident in all three sample sets. The student writing samples display increasing complexity and comprehension in mechanics; content; organization, language selection, and overall effectiveness. In a high number of cases this change goes beyond expected levels of growth for one year of instruction. In addition, this growth and improvement in the student writing samples match up well with the teaching objectives detailed in the Writing Rubrics.

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CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE
SUMMARY OF 1999-2000 STANDARDIZED TEST ANALYSES

By Ron Newell

The Studies

All of the Center for School Change sites used the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests to measure reading, mathematics and writing at the appropriate grade levels (i.e., 3, 5, 8, 10) as per Minnesota state law. Other widely used tests included the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, the California Achievement Test and the Stanford 9 Test. All used some sort of nationally recognized standardized test, usually in a pre-post situation. All children were tested on reading, language usage, writing and math. Some schools chose batteries that reflected the design of the programs they had developed.

Limitations

The primary limitation in the studies was one of small sample size. Most schools in CSC programs are small rural high schools or elementary programs that included one or two classes or only where certain grade levels were tested. Consequently, aggregate scores may be skewed where outliers exist. The only cases where the limitation was overcome was where there was longitudinal data on the same grouping of children who took the same age-appropriate batteries in more than one year. Many of the sites have not had their program in operation long enough to have adequate longitudinal data.

Summary of the Data and Analyses

The full report will give the actual data for each of the sites. This summary is of the analyses of that data.

One, using the fall pre-test, spring post-test method of data collection made it clear that a large number of fluctuations in scores on the part of students rendered any analysis difficult as to whether programs had much affect in that one year. Where there was adequate data over two to three years, CSC sites generally showed a positive growth of students in the basic skills batteries chosen.

Two, where there was an attempt to determine growth of students abilities in particular subject areas (i.e., social studies, science, etc.), test results generally were inconclusive. However, in many cases, the programs were one or two years old, having different students each year, making growth patterns very difficult to determine.

Three, where there is longitudinal data, CSC sites showed better than average growth in basic skills for the most part. Some schools showed exemplary growth (Mississippi Horizons, Brainerd; Falls Elementary, International Falls; Discovery Elementary, Buffalo) and ought to be scrutinized for reasons for such success.

Four, the standardized test data is only a small part of the total evaluation of the sites. Most programs call for affective growth, more community involvement and such things as service learning. By keeping basic skills on an even growth pattern, or in some cases showing better than average gains, these schools have contributed to student growth in more ways than standardized tests can evaluate.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Overview of Center for School Change's Phase II Work

The Center for School Change, based at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, had as a primary focus from 1997 through 2000 the strengthening of linkages between rural communities and their schools. The Center's work was supported by major grants from the Annenberg and Blandin Foundations. According to a Phase II project summary, the Center's goal was "to collaboratively shape learning opportunities to help strengthen rural communities and schools," specifically through two outcome objectives:

1. Help community members, parents, students and educators develop new models of learning and schooling in 20 places so there are:
   a) measurable improvements in students' academic skills, abilities and desire to strengthen/be productive members of their communities.
   b) observable changes in school practices designed to help strengthen communities the schools serve.
   c) measurable increases in the number of people in these 20 rural areas who believe that the public schools are becoming an integral part of their community, that the schools are crucial to strengthening their community, and that the schools are doing this effectively.

2. Help community members, parents, students and educators change policies and practices of several key institutions (post-secondary institutions, state and local boards of education, the State Department of Education, news media and the Legislature) which have a direct impact on the ability of rural schools to strengthen their communities.[1]

The Center pursued these objectives through finding and supporting innovative school/community partnerships in 20 different communities in Greater Minnesota. Participating sites were eligible to receive up to $50,000 in grant support, in three stages:

- up to $5,000 to develop a three-year plan.
- up to $35,000 in implementation grants.
- up to $10,000 for expansion grants once implementation has been successfully completed.

[1] Center for School Change Phase II Project Summary. Undated but released in early 1997.

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Participating schools and communities were also brought together regularly for statewide conferences where they could learn from one another, examine promising models from other places, celebrate successes, and publicize results. They also received various forms of consultation and assistance from Center for School Change staff.

Participating schools and communities are identified in Table 1. Their locations are shown on Map 1.

Table 1:
Center for School Change Phase II Grant Sites

Community	*School*	*Grades*
Brainerd	Mississippi Horizons Technology Magnet	6-9
Buffalo	Discovery Elementary School	K-5
North Shore/Two Harbors	North Shore Elementary	K-6
Emily	Emily Charter School	pre-K-6
Fertile-Beltrami	Links to Learning	K-12
Goodhue	Goodhue Public Schools	K-12
Hanska	Hanska Community Charter School	preschool-6
Heron Lake-Okabena	Southwest Star Concept School	K-12
Houston	Houston Secondary School	7-12
International Falls	Multi-Age Classroom (MAC)	4-6
Isanti	A School for All Seasons	K-4
Janesville	Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary	K-4
Kenyon-Wanamingo	Agriculture, Science & Technology Magnet School	9-12
Mankato	Bridges School	K-6
Miltona	Miltona Science Magnet	K-6
Morton	Eci Nompa Woonspe (Second Chance Learning Center)	K-12
Perham	Together for the Future	9-12
Silver Bay	Practical Education Projects	7-12
Warren/Alvarado/Oslo	Warren/Alvarado/Oslo Schools	7-12
Yellow Medicine East	Bridges School	9-12

Some sites also received assistance from the Center for Reducing Rural Violence, based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. These sites combined pursuit of school/community engagement with a focus on reducing violence in their schools and communities. These sites included Brainerd, Buffalo, Heron Lake-Okabena, Houston, International Falls, Silver Bay and Yellow Medicine East.

(Note: Minneapolis/St. Paul is a reference point only)

Evaluation of School/Community Collaboration

Rainbow Research, Inc., a Minneapolis-based, nonprofit research and evaluation firm, was retained by the Center for School Change to evaluate the community engagement dimensions of these Phase II projects. Our primary focus was to discover what these school/community partnerships looked like (what they included, how they worked, what challenges they experienced) and learn what difference they are making (for their communities, their schools and their students).

The evaluation was to be useful both for local communities and the Center for School Change and its broader public audiences. It was not only to judge but to help improve local efforts and build local capacities. In accordance with this commitment

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to usefulness and capacity-building, we developed a participatory design with local educators, community leaders and students active in planning, collecting, interpreting and using information.

Working with Center staff and leaders of several sites, we developed a framework for documentation and evaluation that included five dimensions:

A. Is your community more engaged in the educational process?
B. Is the education of young people moving beyond the classroom into the community?
C. Is the quality of the school/community partnership improving?
D. Key lessons being learned
E. Summary of outcomes and impacts

We led trainings on using this framework locally, and coordinating local evaluation efforts into a statewide learning and reporting process, at the June 1997 and June 1998 statewide conferences.

Projects were encouraged to keep their own notes and evidence within these categories. Center for School Change regional coordinators worked with sites to conduct periodic written surveys of various participant populations. Rainbow Research staff collected additional information directly from some sites selected in consultation with Center staff.

In June 1998, we conducted focus group interviews with project teams from eight sites that were attending the Center's statewide conference. Those project leaders also filled out a short reflective written questionnaire then. Our interim report, published in January 1999, drew on that data.

For the final stage of the evaluation, we organized the project sites into three categories. Five sites were chosen for in-depth study and received three site visits from Rainbow Research staff, in Spring 1999, Fall 1999, and Spring 2000. Another five sites were chosen to receive one site visit each, in Spring 2000. For the remaining 10 sites we relied upon written information forwarded by Center for School Change staff.

Sites were chosen for focus groups, single visits or in-depth study based on geographical balance and diversity of model (including which school grades and how much of the school system was involved in the project). We also targeted our learning resources toward sites that were more fully-developed with more-extensive results. Our premise was that sites that had done more offered a larger experience base from which to teach about how to foster collaboration and what it can contribute to communities, schools and students. Because some sites developed more quickly than others, the sample selected for closer scrutiny was adjusted from the eight chosen in 1998 for focus groups to the 10 chosen in 1999 for site visits.

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Sites are listed by evaluation category in Table 2.

Table 2:
Sites' Role in Evaluation

In-depth (visited 3 times):	• Brainerd: Mississippi Horizons Technology Magnet* • Buffalo Discovery Elementary School • Goodhue Public Schools* • International Falls MAC • Perham Together for the Future*
Visited once:	• Fertile-Beltrami Links to Learning • Houston Secondary School • Hanska Community Charter School • Heron Lake-Okabena Southwest Star Concept School* • Miltona Science Magnet*
Written data only:	• Emily Charter School • Isanti A School for All Seasons • Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary • Kenyon-Wanamingo Agriculture, Science &Technology Magnet School • Mankato Bridges School • Morton Second Chance Learning Center • North Shore Elementary* • Silver Bay Practical Education Projects • Warren/Alvarado/Oslo Schools* • Yellow Medicine East Bridges School*

* Also participated in 6/98 team focus group interviews and individual questionnaires.

Each site visit lasted four to six hours and included interviews with a spectrum of key participants and observers. The specific mix of people interviewed varied from visit to visit and site to site but included teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, community education coordinators, students, parents and community representatives. Community voices included business operators, government officials and agency staff, and local newspaper editors. People in hands-on, project governance and observer roles were included. Site visits also usually included observation of classroom activities. In many cases, we were able to sit in on meetings of project steering committees.

To enable more reflective dialogue on the evaluation themes, we sent a written Site Visit Guide outlining our key questions in advance of each visit for the project liaison to share with those who would be meeting with us. To continue to engage site participants as co-creators of evaluation findings, we drafted a thematic summary

of findings following each visit and shared this with participants for clarification, correction and further comments.

At both the in-depth and other visited sites, in addition to interviews and observations, we collected relevant documents for review. These included newsletters, plans, minutes of steering committee meetings, and press clippings. The five in-depth sites also filled out a "documentation matrix" instrument that we constructed, to document more precisely the form and extent of community engagement and community-based education in their projects.

Data collection instruments used by Rainbow Research are shown in Appendix A, along with a table summarizing which forms of data from which sites were used for preparing this report.

An effort was made to gather information in standardized, quantifiable form through periodic written surveys of students, parents, teachers and administrators in most sites. Using instruments developed by the Center for School Change to collect self-reports of attitudes and behaviors, surveys were administered at various times from Fall 1997 through Fall 2000. Over a thousand students, hundreds of parents and dozens of teachers filled out surveys. We saw survey returns from 12 of the 20 sites. However, data varied from place to place in when it was collected, which populations were surveyed and the number of respondents in each population segment. For our analysis, we decided to concentrate on four sets of aggregate survey data from Spring 2000: parents from six sites, teachers from three sites, secondary students (grades 7-12) from four sites and upper elementary students (grades 3-6) from six sites. This provided a respondent pool of over 240 parents, over 40 teachers, over 600 students grades 7-12, and over 500 students grades 3-6.

Our evaluation's primary outcomes focus was on community and school system outcomes. The Center for School Change made other arrangements for evaluating student academic achievements. An outside consultant was commissioned to assess student writing samples from selected sites. Those assessment reports are presented in Appendix B.

Guide to This Report

The rest of this report, following this introduction, is organized into three major sections.

Section II, "The Shape of School/Community Collaboration," describes what these partnerships looked like. Subsections report on community involvement in the student educational process, on how these partnership projects are led and governed, on facilities and resources used jointly by school and community, and on difficulties in school/community collaboration.

Section III, "Outcomes of School/Community Collaboration," presents findings on outcomes – for participating communities, school systems and students.

Section IV, "Conclusions," contains our conclusions on how to build strong school/community partnerships and what can be expected of them.

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Appendix A contains evaluation instruments used by Rainbow Research in this project. Appendix B contains student writing assessments and Appendix C contains a summary of academic assessments made by other evaluation consultants for the Center for School Change.

II. THE SHAPE OF SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

In mapping the shape of collaboration between rural schools and their communities, we saw three basic dimensions. First, how does education of students draw upon community people, topics and settings? Second, how do school officials and community citizens work together to lead and govern school/community initiatives? Third, to what extent are school facilities used also by the community for purposes other than the education of young people?

Community Involvement in Education

Community involvement in students' education happened both through bringing the community into the classroom and through bringing students out into the community.

These projects were distinctive both for the extent to which they used community adults in traditional classroom "teacher's aide" roles and for using community adults to lead various educational activities. Many of these projects cultivated large numbers of parents and other volunteers to grade papers, tutor small groups or individual students, and assist with clerical tasks such as copying and organizing supplies so that teachers could focus on teaching. Some sites had a goal of at least one volunteer in every classroom every day in roles such as these.

Where these projects innovated beyond that traditional model was in recognizing that adults in the community could teach students something from their own distinctive knowledge. Sometimes this meant crafts and artisanry: making quilts in Brainerd; leading students in woodcarving, rosemaling (a Norwegian style of painting on wood) and soap-making in Fertile-Beltrami; and making metal dustpans in International Falls. Mural projects involving students and local artists, sometimes using paint, sometimes other media such as wood and porcelain and stone, were conducted in many places.

Community people also came into these schools to share from their career expertise. Sometimes this meant talking about one's job as part of a careers exploration unit. Or community volunteers drew both from their individual work experience and from a packaged curriculum to teach students, as in Brainerd's middle school where local businesspersons visited weekly to teach about commerce and trade using a Junior Achievement classroom curriculum. In some sites, community adults drew on their knowledge both of specific topics and of principles of public speaking to serve as judges on student presentations in various subjects. Media and advertising employees served as advisors to student newspapers and communications projects. In Fertile-Beltrami, a local shopkeeper advised the 6th grade operators of an in-school student store, and local business operators taught marketing and sales to Houston high school business students.

Survey data reveal broad agreement between parents, teachers and students that community members volunteer in classroom educational activities, though perception of how extensive that

involvement is varied among these groups. Of the 241 parents surveyed in five sites in Spring 2000, 75% said this statement was "always" or "often" true: "community members volunteer time and resources in and outside the classroom to help educate students." Teachers, who might pay closest attention to community involvement in their classroom since they are in charge day to day, perceived that involvement as more limited. While 69% of the 48 teachers surveyed in three sites said that parents and community members were involved at least "sometimes" in educating students in their classroom, that included only 26% who said that parents and community members were "always" or "often" involved there. Of the 654 secondary students surveyed in four sites that same spring, 72% agreed that "community members volunteer time and resources to help me learn in the classroom." And at the elementary school level, a whopping 93% of the 568 third through sixth graders surveyed at six sites agreed that "people from the community come to our class." Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 show survey responses on these items.

Table 3: Parents:
"Community members volunteer time & resources in & outside the classroom to help educate students."

2000	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		TOTAL
	15%	6	**60%**	144	**24%**	57	**1%**	2	**1%**	2	**100%** 241

Table 4: Teachers:
"Parents/community members are involved in educating students in my classroom."

2000	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		TOTAL
	2%	1	**24%**	11	**43%**	20	**28%**	13	**2%**	1	**100%** 46

Table 5: Secondary students (grades 7-12):
"Community members volunteer time & resources to help me learn in the classroom."

2000	Yes		No		TOTAL
	72%	473	**28%**	183	**100%** 656

Table 6: Elementary students (grades 3-6): "People from the community come to our class."					
2000	Yes		No		TOTAL
	93%	531	**7%**	37	**100%** 568

Community-based education in these projects occurred not only in the classroom but out in the community. At the middle school and high school level, students did "job shadowing" where they accompanied a working adult through their daily routine.

Students interviewed local elders for historical research – about overarching topics such as immigration experiences, the Depression, World War II, the Holocaust and the civil rights movement; and also about local history such as the evolution of logging, farming, churches and religious groups, and memorable disasters with which the community had coped. One dramatic example was in Houston where students heard from a resident who had been an award-winning member of the Belgian anti-Nazi resistance in World War II – at the same age (17-18) as the students to whom she was talking!

Classes took field trips to various environmental, cultural and occupational sites: to parks and wildlife preserves, museums and historic sites, hospitals, police and fire stations, courthouses, city offices, paper mills and factories.

Sometimes this community-based learning had a service dimension. In Heron Lake-Okabena, 7th and 8th grade math students worked with the city to survey and map all of the light poles in the community. They also helped women redesign their display booths for the Women of Today Craft Show. In Goodhue, computer class students worked with the city clerk on revising the city's water billing system. Students in many places performed clean-ups of parks, downtown alleys and other public spaces, and participated in fundraising walks and other benefits. In Perham, high school students helped the local emergency services office collect, organize and distribute furniture, clothing and food. In International Falls, elementary students made decorations for the town's "Icebox Days" festival and helped staff booths. Math classes helped survey land for a new walking/skiing trail, and science classes inventoried animal and plant species.

Students in many places played educational and hospitality roles with younger children at child care centers, elementary schools and libraries; and with older or frail adults at senior centers, assisted living residences and hospitals. Three high school students in Perham designed and led social and educational activities for

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residents of Briarwood Residence, and produced a brochure for the Residence. Brainerd middle school students coached early-elementary students in Internet use, helped them develop "Hyperstudio" computer portfolios of their writings and drawings, and advised them in poetry writing. As part of their violence reduction efforts, students from the middle school Violence Reduction Team became mentors for younger students, helping them with organizational and study skills and redirecting poor behavior.

Water quality in area rivers, lakes and groundwater was monitored by students in Perham. They shared findings with regional governmental agencies, environmental officials and lakes associations. Using an environmental preserve reclaimed from a former feedlot, high school students led a "Swamp Romp" environmental day camp for grade school children. Brainerd students tested Mississippi River quality and made public educational presentations. They also did research on area frogs – an important indicator of ecosystem health.

In a few sites, students operated businesses that served the whole community. Houston high school students ran two nonprofit businesses: a printing shop and a bicycle repair and rental shop. Fertile-Beltrami computer students developed and maintained Internet web-sites for local businesses and institutions; they also produced a community profile and web-based virtual tour of the community. In Heron Lake-Okabena, students operated the community's only convenience store and coffee shop, located inside the Southwest Star school building.

Survey data showed that teachers perceived greater community engagement with student education outside the classroom than inside. Of the 47 teachers surveyed on this item from three schools, 91% said that community members volunteer time and resources outside the classroom to help educate students at least "sometimes." This included 43% who said this happened "often." Among students grades 7-12, 79% of the 650 students surveyed from four schools agreed that their school provides learning experiences outside the building. Among the 570 students grades 3-6 surveyed in six sites, 95% agreed that "sometimes my class learns outside our school building." Tables 7, 8 and 9 show survey data on these items.

Table 7: Teachers:
"Community members volunteer time & resources outside the classroom to help educate students."

2000	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		TOTAL
	2%	1	43%	20	47%	22	9%	4	0%	0	100% 47

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Table 8: Students, grades 7-12: "My school provides learning experiences outside the building."						
2000	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	79%	520	**21%**	135	**100%**	655

Table 9: Students, grades 3-6: "Sometimes my class learns outside our school building."						
2000	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	95%	544	**5%**	26	**100%**	570

In many cases, community partnership projects integrated multiple subject areas and forms of community engagement. Three examples:

1) At Buffalo's Discovery School, community fire fighters came into the school to teach fire safety. Classes took field trips to the fire station to learn how the fire department does its job. Students also participated in a community-wide fundraiser to purchase an imaging camera to be used by fire fighters to locate people in smoke-filled buildings during fires. They responded to a challenge to cover the floor of the school commons with coins, which generated $1,400 plus a $500 match contributed by a local bank. Buffalo Community Hospital also sends volunteers to speak on health topics at the school, hosts student field trips, and displays student artwork on its walls.

2) Miltona 5th and 6th graders in 2000 did a three-month sausage project with the local meat locker, integrating math, science and communications skills. They researched spices, tested the locker's varieties of sausage, created their own recipes, ground the meat and filled the casings. Once the sausage was made they staged a taste-testing event in town, and entered a statewide competition where they won 4th place out of more than 35 lockers entered. The local bank participated by providing a loan for which students had to apply, offering appropriate budget and rationale, and repay. To recoup expenses, students sold the sausage through the locker and other venues (such as bringing samples to the Center for School Change conference). They spoke about the project on Alexandria radio stations.

   In the fall of 1998, students, teachers and community members collaborated to build and sell an ice fishing house. The lumber yard donated materials and plans, the town blacksmith made wheels and frame, and a local contractor provided his shop as the site to build it. Students worked alongside community volunteers to construct the house, and the banker

provided a loan to finance it. The house was sold through a raffle before Christmas.

3) Falls Elementary School.in International Falls staged "Community Celebrations" in 1997 and 1999. The first was led by Larry Long, a Minneapolis-based musician, educator and organizer; the second was created entirely by local people. Each event highlighted stories from the lives of four community elders. Students interviewed the elders, and worked with musicians to create songs about their stories. Songs and stories were eventually presented by students and musicians in a grand evening of performance attended by hundreds of people from throughout the community. The second celebration even included a multi-screen video presentation developed by a local freelance photographer. People that we interviewed described these as magical, memorable events that enhanced community pride and built bridges across generations and between school and community.

As part of their violence reduction work, 38 parents in Buffalo joined with students, teachers and an artist-in-residence to create poems, puppets and skits showing how children can work together to solve a problem and unite the community.

Leadership and Governance

Day to day leadership of these projects rested with the teachers, principals or superintendents who played central coordinating roles. However, most projects had a steering committee or advisory committee with representation from parents, other adults in the community, educators (teachers and administrators) and sometimes students (in middle school and high school projects). These committees had two core purposes: (1) to set the vision and give guidance to the core teachers and administrators responsible for day-to-day implementation – in other words, to provide a mechanism for community ownership and accountability; and (2) to represent the innovative project in the community – to publicize it, explain it, and facilitate access to other community actors such as prospective hosts of student projects or venues for student presentations.

These committees generated ideas for possible activities and partners, set goals, monitored progress, solved problems, and celebrated progress. They generally met quarterly.

One variation on the steering/advisory committee model was the charter school board, which existed in Emily, Hanska and Morton. Consistent with Minnesota charter school law, these schools are governed by boards that include teachers and community representatives.

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Another variation, visible in Goodhue, centered leadership and governance in a community improvement organization that had strong school participation. The Goodhue Forever Coalition includes government, business, teachers and high school student representatives. Its goals include community and economic development as well as school improvement.

At the school staff level, leadership tended to come from experienced teachers, who had already tried the classroom-and-textbook approach and were hungry for something more. Because this kind of educating depends on a web of active relationships in the community, perhaps, the teachers and principals at the forefront tended to be those with 10 or more years' experience in the district and the community. Teachers with less teaching or community experience who were assigned to these projects felt the steeper learning curve of developing their community partners and the specifics of effective teaching strategies in this format.

Shared Facilities and Resources

These projects sought to make better use of the local community as an asset for the local school system, and to make better use of the school system as an asset for the community. A primary way in which schools serve as community assets is through their core function of educating the community's young people. These school/community collaborative projects tried to pursue that mission in ways that made better use of local community resources for students' education, and that used community resources to enable better academic achievement for students by offering hands-on learning methods and real-life relevance. A second purpose of these projects was to strengthen young people's connection to and pride in their communities, so that they would be more likely to continue as contributing members and leaders of the community instead of becoming an "export product" leaving the community after their school years.

Schools can be community assets not only through the young people they educate, but also as facilities for community use independent of students. Many of these school/community projects encouraged greater community use of school facilities. Several projects even developed facilities for joint use by school and community.

The best example of existing school facilities being used for broader community purposes might have been in Hanska, where the town's major cultural festival, a Syttende Mai (May 17, the Norwegian national holiday) celebration, is based in the school gym for a week. The town's strong Norwegian heritage is expressed in this festival, the largest of its kind in the county. Over 3500 people attended the 1999 celebration. Illustrating the integration of school and community, students performed dances as part of the celebration. Funds raised from the celebration were shared with the school. The local business woman who chaired the Syttende Mai festival also volunteered at the school (even though she did not have children herself in the school).

Several other projects also used school gyms and kitchens for community meals and events.

Computer labs are another feature shared by school and community in many sites. Used by students by day, these are open to community use one or two evenings a week, or for special occasions, as in Miltona, where the computers are available for creating custom holiday cards on one or two Saturdays in the late fall. In other locations, computer labs are used by local agencies and businesses for training or projects. At Southwest STAR School in Heron Lake-Okabena, the computers are used by Community Education, by the Cooperative Extension Service for local area business, and by the state Department of Children, Families and Learning for summer workshops. Perham's Technology Center is a joint venture of the school system and the city.

Mississippi Horizons School in Brainerd found that its willingness to install PC computers as well as Apples made it an attractive partner for local businesses. It is the only school in the area with a roomful of linked PCs, yet PCs are the primary platform used by most businesses. The PC lab was jointly developed in 1997 by the school and Universal Pensions, Inc., which provided 20 of the 31 computers (an estimated $60,000 investment). In 2000, another local employer got into the act when St. Joseph's Hospital purchased upgraded RAM and Windows NT and Windows 2000 software (estimated $7,000 investment). Both UPI and St. Joseph's use the lab for employee training, coordinating schedules with the school. UPI also uses it to test software. A third area business, Russell & Herder advertising agency, has begun using the lab as a phone bank after hours, using a DOS-based system to survey customers and gather data on floppy disks. To show appreciation for use of the facility, Russell & Herder conducted a telephone survey of parents' interests and preferences for the school.

In Heron Lake-Okabena, the community wellness center is located within Southwest STAR School. It is both used and staffed by community members and students.

Sometimes the jointly-developed facilities are located outside the school building. Two sites in the School Change network developed local walking trails for use by school and community. In Goodhue, the trail leads past significant cultural and historical sites and is intended to enhance the community as a tourism destination. In International Falls, the trail leads through woods adjoining the school campus and is more of a nature trail and fitness trail for walking seniors, joggers and skiers. In both communities, developing the trail offered numerous opportunities for student learning as well as service -- as significant sites along the trail were identified and researched, the trail was mapped and laid out, landscaping was planned and installed, plaques and brochures for trail users were planned and created, and the trail was maintained. Students and teachers worked alongside environmental agencies, higher education units, history and community improvement associations and local government to create and maintain these trails.

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A final noteworthy category of joint facilities includes the student-run businesses that serve the broader community. Fertile-Beltrami's web-site service for area businesses, churches and agencies; Houston's print shop and bicycle shop; and Heron Lake-Okabena's convenience store all let students exercise various competencies in a real-world context of practical value to their neighbors in the community.

Difficulties in School/Community Collaboration

Establishing these school/community partnerships was not easy. Given the challenges and barriers for this kind of project, we found it inspiring and remarkable that some teachers, principals and community members sprinkled across Minnesota are reaching beyond "business as usual" to establish meaningful, ongoing community/school partnerships.

Teaching is a busy, demanding job even when done the old-fashioned way with a teacher running a classroom full of 20 or 30 students. Reaching out to form and maintain relationships in the community requires different skills and activities, independent from preparing lesson plans and grading student work. By involving more people and places in the learning plan, there are more logistics, schedules, and individuals' preferences and temperaments to coordinate and be responsive to.

Furthermore, partnerships are unpredictable. When one enters into an authentic partnership – in which all partners are entitled to initiate and define and share the leadership roles – one can't fully know where it will lead. One might experience support and enrichment; one might also experience increased demands, scrutiny and accountability. Either way, one is sure to encounter increased complexity. Simply trying to coordinate with someone else's schedule increases the complexity of one's work calendar. When one is trying to engage someone in a role that is out of the ordinary for them – as when teachers engage community adults to serve in educational roles with children or teens – the complexity increases further. Teachers who teach this way must be comfortable with ambiguity.

Drawing community partners into the teaching process means that teachers open themselves up to scrutiny by other adults. The traditional educational model lets each teacher work independently within her or his own classroom. In the community partnership model, teachers gain adult colleagues but also make themselves vulnerable and accountable to those colleagues.

Along with those complexities and unpredictable dynamics within the partnership, innovation also puts educators in tension with their professional peers. When a teacher or administrator does something different, some colleagues read that as an indictment of them – as "showing them up." Colleagues may feel that innovation as pressure on them also to innovate, to do more or different than what they had been doing.

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These are pressures working on any innovators in any system. The innovations piloted in these projects were of a specific kind: increasing community engagement in the schools and school engagement with the community. By reaching out to the community and inviting more community attention to what that part of the school is doing, the innovators become more prominent locally. As their work attracts the attention of media, policy-makers and funders – and the Center for School Change worked assiduously to draw attention to these innovations as part of their broader educational systems change strategy – the innovators also gain professional prominence. All this can generate jealousy and resentment by professional peers not in that limelight. When educators attract outside resources to support their innovations, as when these collaboratives attracted funds, conference opportunities, retreat opportunities, and publicity from the Center for School Change, some peers resent the differential in resources.

In response to these dynamics, innovators in these projects often experienced a withdrawal of peer support and cooperation. They experienced skeptical questions, critical observations, damning with faint praise, and the strain of having some peers that hoped they would fall on their face and the innovation would go away.

Skepticism and resistance came not only from fellow teachers and administrators, but from tradition-oriented parents and community members, who were afraid that change would include a loss of current strengths. If students switch to learning through interdisciplinary projects, will college admissions offices penalize them for not having grades in "chemistry" or "advanced English"? If students get to leave the school building to do learning activities in the community, won't they just goof off?

When innovation is supported by outside funders and partners, there are extra chores of writing proposals and reports, and participating in documentation and evaluation: more tasks, more expectations on top of the teachers' core responsibilities toward their students.

To properly document and substantiate student learning from nontraditional learning methods is not easy either. The strengths of community-based learning generally lie in areas of student development outside the narrow focus of standardized achievement tests. In community-based learning, students develop their abilities to conceptualize and follow through on projects, form relationships and work together with diverse other people, speak in public, and integrate information and techniques from diverse disciplines such as science and English, math and history. When these outcomes are not recognized and rewarded by conventional academic evaluation measures, teachers and their partners face an extra barrier in pursuing these alternate strategies.

Then there are the deeper outcomes of pride of place, commitment to community, a stronger sense of identity and belonging and rootedness. These are truly countercultural values in this era of rapid globalization, rampant consumerism and

powerful professionalism. These outcomes go against the grain of the dominant 20th century educational model that trains young people to leave their home towns and move to the metropolis, move anywhere that there might be job opportunity. Instead of encouraging students to take pride in who they are and where they come from, and cultivating an inclination to "bloom where they are planted," which often means working in local small businesses or starting new ones here, most of 20th century education has encouraged students to prepare themselves to move to "where the action is," whether that's the Twin Cities or Silicon Valley. Against a backdrop of decades-long population decline or below-average growth, of economic disparities between metropolitan and Greater Minnesota, these school/community partnership projects are fighting the widespread assumption that the best way to get ahead is to get out, that you can't get up unless you get away from your small town origins.

The good news is that as these projects got up and running – as relationships began to form, mutually acceptable roles were defined, and experience with this kind of education began to accumulate – they generated their own satisfactions and the work became easier. Once relationships were underway, they continued with much less effort. After a community partner had performed her or his educational role once or twice, less orientation, preparation, supervision and coordination was required to do it again. Once a few community relationships were established, they easily led to others, through word of mouth networking and because existing relationships served as models to orient new partners.

And as school/community partnership projects began to achieve outcomes, that contributed to increasing satisfaction and ongoing momentum. We discuss outcomes in the next chapter.

III. OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Outcomes for the Community

We found that the fundamental outcome for these communities was strengthened community pride and identity, based on our interviews with community members, educators and students in 10 sites and our review of survey data and other local materials. Schools are widely recognized as an important asset in a community. When the school is perceived as effective and successful, this lifts morale in the community. As more community members participate in school activities and attend school functions, and as more classes fan out into the community to do learning and service, the community becomes more aware of and knowledgeable about the school. More relationships form between community members, teachers and students. The school becomes more firmly identified as a community institution. Community members feel more pride in their school and gain a sense of ownership over and well-being about the school.

This, in turn, enhances pride in their own community. When people feel good about their school, about their young people and the education they're receiving locally, they feel good about their community. They feel more optimistic about their community's future. For rural communities that often lose bright and talented people, that may be experiencing population, enrollment or tax base decline, that feel vulnerable to further decline or to domination by outside forces, a strong local school is an important beacon of hope, an important asset to build on.

Many community leaders interviewed believe these projects are helping build the pool of future civic leaders, business operators and workers for their communities. By showing students the types of meaningful work to be found in their community, by helping students and area employers form relationships which may lead to employer-employee relationships, by providing experiential learning directly relevant to performing some local jobs, and by strengthening kids' awareness of and attachment to local history, environment, institutions and individuals – all these are perceived to help strengthen students' attachment to and appreciation for their community. Students are perceived to become less likely to leave after high school, and more likely to return if they do.

Along with this strengthened attachment in students, civic leadership skills are developed through project-based learning that exercises teamwork, goal-setting, project planning and follow-through, listening and interpersonal communication, and public speaking. When students engage with significant local community concerns --

such as water quality and supply, land use and development policy, sidewalk and streetlight planning and maintenance, health care and affordable housing, economic development goals and strategies -- they become more knowledgeable about real community issues. When they make a contribution to dealing with those issues, they strengthen their own identities as valuable, contributing members of the community.

Communities benefit not only from expanded numbers of young people with civic skills and local attachments. They benefit as well from an expanded pool of academically and personally successful students, as these community-based, hands-on, project-oriented learning methods enable some students who were languishing in conventional, textbook-and-lecture classrooms to thrive. By offering more pathways to success, these innovations enable more students to be successful.

In some rural communities, such as Hanska and Miltona, these collaborations were essential for keeping the school open. Because the community collaborations enlivened the curriculum and extended limited resources through engagement of volunteers, the school was able to attract and retain sufficient students to keep the school open, when otherwise it would be closed. These innovative, community-oriented schools tend to attract and retain students, strengthening the schools' ability to stay open even in situations of small or declining population. In a policy context of school choice, these schools are proving effective at competing for students. When a school stays open, this keeps the school's middle-class jobs in the community, too. The school also serves as a hub for community life. People come together and mingle as they attend concerts, sports and other student performances, or when they interact in community-based learning activities.

Beyond these core achievements in community attitudes and youth development, and the fundamental impact of keeping a school open in a rural community, we found many other examples of tangible benefits to participating communities. In analyzing results from the 10 communities that we visited, we found five major categories (encompassing 10 sub-categories) of community benefit resulting from community-based learning activities, as shown in Table 10.

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Table 10: Community-based learning: Benefits to the community			
	# of examples	Total # of examples	# of sites
A Community Service			
A1 Clean-up, public works	5	30	3
A2 Collect/distribute charity goods	9		3
A3 Hospitality, human service w/young, old, others	16		5
B Research & Analysis			
B1 Community profile, civic research	8	17	6
B2 Water testing	3		2
B3 Historical and ethnographic research	6		5
C Business development & assistance			
C1 Retail (e.g. bicycle shop, printing shop, convenience store)	2	12	1
C2 To businesses (e.g. website service)	10		6
D Shared facilities			
e.g. computer lab, wellness center	7	7	5
E Community identity, pride, culture			
Festivals, celebrations	13	13	5

At least half of the communities experienced benefits in human services, community festivals, business assistance, civic research, historical/ethnographic research, and shared facilities. Somewhat less widespread were examples of community clean-up activities, collecting and distributing charity goods, water testing and retail services; we found these at one to three sites.

In summary, as outlined in the earlier section on community involvement in education, students are nurturing old, young and frail members of their communities; cleaning up parks, trails and sidewalks; collecting and distributing food, clothing and shelter for families in need. They are developing profiles of their community, in both print and on-line formats, useful for recruiting businesses, residents, visitors and outside funding. They are generating data on local water quality, useful for planning drinking water supplies and guiding public, corporate and private environmental policies. They are producing research on significant local people, places, events, institutions and issues, relevant for museums, historical societies and local identity. Businesses, government agencies, faith-based and community organizations are receiving technology systems analyses from students, and Intenet web-pages so they are visible on the information superhighway. Communities have computer labs, wellness centers, convenience stores, bike shops, printing shops, and multi-purpose trails, thanks to the efforts of schools and students in partnership with the community.

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Outcomes for the School System

The most important outcome we saw for participating school systems was the outward ripple of additional community collaboration by other educators and schools. As other teachers and principals watched these projects and saw that this approach is do-able, generates good results for students, generates good publicity and respect in the community, and offers more variety and stimulation than the traditional classroom-and-textbook approach, they began to pick up some of these practices. Field trips, use of community volunteers, participation in school/community festivals, and use of local examples in the curriculum became more commonplace.

A second outcome was that these projects catalyzed other types of innovations in local school systems – such as teaching strategies and curriculum development. Many of these school/community partnership projects modeled other innovative features too: multi-age classrooms, project-based learning, team-based learning, use of internet and other new technologies, use of Responsive Classroom techniques for increasing discipline and harmony in the classroom. These features, too, were picked up somewhat by other teachers and schools.

In International Falls, for example, while the Multi-Age Classroom (MAC) project supported by the Center for School Change involved only four teachers, 35 teachers from across the county participated in Responsive Classroom training in 1999 made available through the MAC project. (This may have been the most dramatic outcome in this network resulting from the partnership between the Center for Reducing Rural Violence and the Center for School Change; both centers supported the Responsive Classroom training.) This included all the teachers at the local parochial school, 12 teachers from the K-2 public elementary school, and seven other teachers from Falls Elementary. A growing number of teachers in Falls Elementary are clustering student desks for team learning instead of lining them up in rows. And a MAC teacher is now active in a middle school "transition committee" re-designing the school system's approach for 7th and 8th graders, so they don't get lost in the 7-12 grade high school.

Southwest Star Concept School was another system where teacherse implemented Responsive Classroom techniques after going through training provided through their Center for Reducing Rural Violence support.

A third outcome for school systems was that teachers and staff might have become more strongly attached to their local community, as their knowledge, relationships and local visibility increased. We did not track this indicator rigorously. However, it appeared that teachers and administrators active in these projects were firmly embedded in local relationships. They were valued and prominent members of the local community. The projects may be contributing to increased retention of teachers, breaking the pattern of new teachers leaving after a few years for jobs in bigger systems and bigger communities.

According to Center for School Change staff, community leaders in some sites, such as Miltona, admitted that they hope these community-based learning activities will draw new teachers into relationships in the community that will influence the teachers to put down roots locally, rather than move off to a bigger school and community in a few years. They recruit for staff receptive to community-based approaches on the premise that they'll be more likely to stick around.

A fourth outcome for school systems was these projects probably contributed to the retention of talented, innovative teachers. The teachers who led these projects are widely recognized as excellent teachers, who get into this as part of their quest for excellence and continuing development. These projects allowed these teachers to find satisfying challenges in their current setting – so they didn't have to switch careers or move elsewhere to find meaningful, cutting-edge work. A few administrators that we interviewed candidly admitted that they supported these projects because they didn't want to lose these excellent teachers – whether or not the administrators fully understood the particulars of the innovations pursued by these teachers.

Outcomes for Students

Rainbow Research was not asked to conduct any evaluation activities focused specifically on student academic achievement. The Center for School Change relied on other evaluation consultants and strategies to address that question. Appendix B includes assessments of student writing that consultant David Evertz performed for the Center, and Appendix C includes summaries of academic assessments performed by consultant Ron Newell.

Our primary focus was on community change and school system change. Nonetheless, through our site visits and interviews with community members, teachers, administrators, parents and students, and our analysis of survey data from these groups, we gained some perspective on how students were changing through their experience in these collaborative, community-based educational models. Development of students as citizens, persons and scholars was an important concern to all the stakeholders we met.

The most significant outcome for students we observed might have been that their identity as a contributing member of their community was strengthened. Students built knowledge and relationships within their community. They became more aware of their own contributions and capacity to contribute to their community, and of the possible niches, jobs and roles through which they could someday make further contributions. While it's too soon to tell what students' adult choices on where to live and work and how to participate in their communities will be, it appeared that students' sense of attachment to their community was being strengthened.

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For example, as Table 11 shows, over 90% of the secondary students surveyed at four sites said they "often" or "occasionally" do things which help their school and/or community. Among students in grades 3-6 surveyed (Table 12), 88% agreed with the statement, "I do things which help my school and community."

Table 11: Students, grades 7-12: "I do things which help my school and/or community."

2000	Often		Occasionally		Never		TOTAL	
	17%	114	73%	485	10%	64	100%	663

Table 12: Students, grades 3-6: "I do things which help my school & community."

2000	Yes		No		TOTAL	
	88%	496	12%	69	100%	565

Through their increased contact with diverse adults from the community – especially side-by-side in learning activities – students gained increased poise and articulacy. In site after site, we heard comments from community adults about what good questions students asked, how clear and self-assured students' presentations were, and what good self-control they showed.

Strengthened public speaking skills appeared to be another widespread outcome for students. Having occasions to exercise these skills in front of community/adult audiences, instead of simply one's classmates and core teachers, appeared to help. Whether this meant conducting interviews of retired or working adults about their life or job experiences, presenting findings from an historical or environmental project, or making a presentation about their community-based program to school boards or lower grades, students have many opportunities to exercise their public communications skills. As one student told us:

> "When I came here I didn't like to give speeches. Now I volunteer at every opportunity. We're excited about what we're talking about, we know what we want to say. It's not like an assigned topic."[2]

We also heard a great deal about improved social skills from students – not just for interacting with adults, but also for getting along and working together with other students. The extensive use of group projects in which students had to exercise

[2] Perham, Spring 2000, field notes p. 9.

teamwork skills probably contributed to this. Students learned how to negotiate, how to make decisions fairly in a group, how to be part of a group, yet remain an individual within that group. People in projects with multi-age formats often said that clustering children of obviously different ages reduced competition and increased displays of helping, cooperative behavior.

Students that we interviewed spoke of how much more interesting this kind of learning was. The subject matter seemed real and immediate – not abstract and distant as textbook descriptions seem to many learners.

The combination of community-based and project-based learning appeared to develop students' skills at setting goals and pursuing them – their capacity for self-direction expanded. As one teacher of a high school program told us:

> "There's a huge difference between freshmen, and juniors and seniors in [this program]. The freshmen say, 'I need someplace to go.' The juniors and seniors say, 'I want to do this, and here's where, how and for how long I'll do it."[3]

The vice-principal from that school agreed, in a separate interview:

> "I can say [this program] has made some kids stronger – more responsible, more self-directed. They've met the unknown a number of times, and aren't afraid of it."[4]

He went on to say that these students require less "cattle herding" than those in the regular high school.

Reduced student violence and misbehavior was an outcome reported by Discovery School in Buffalo, one of the sites with joint support from the Center for Rural Violence and Center for School Change. Another of those sites, Kelley High School in Silver Bay, reported a decrease in student misbehavior on school buses after violence reduction efforts focused on school bus safety awareness.

[3] Perham, Spring 2000, field notes pp. 1a, 7a.
[4] Perham, Spring 2000, field notes p. 2.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, we found these projects to be innovative examples of collaboration between rural schools and communities. Our core conclusion is that carefully developed collaborative efforts can achieve meaningful benefits for communities, school systems and students. These projects illustrate well what such collaboration can accomplish. These projects are:

- bringing community resources into schools,
- making school facilities more accessible to their communities,
- generating service to community from students in many forms including human services, policy and historical research, assistance to businesses, and staffing retail businesses,
- connecting students and schools to their communities,
- building community pride in both students and community members, and
- pooling resources to create facilities and programs that benefit both schools and community.

We found that these collaborative ventures encountered many obstacles. Some obstacles had to do with collaboration: involving numerous players with diverse interests and temperaments meant generating a shared vision was not easy. Even finding times when people could meet to plan or monitor progress required coordinating schedules – and in rural communities where people often play multiple leadership roles, work long hours at lower wage scales, and drive longer for jobs and errands, time is in scarce supply.

Some obstacles involved resistance to innovation generally. Within school systems this included bureaucratic traditions that historically rewarded orderly compliance more than messy creativity, some educators nervous about meeting new state graduation standards and others simply content with their former, teacher-centered educational strategies. Within communities this included parents who assumed their children should have conventional "3 R's" and classroom- and textbook-based instruction, and those who worried that college admissions offices wouldn't equally respect experimental courses.

A third set of barriers pertained to community-based education. Community-based strategies drew more public scrutiny of schools. By heightening local prominence of the educators who were out in the community and cultivating partnerships, this sometimes raised resentment among fellow teachers and administrators who were left out of that limelight. And doing education out in the community was logistically complex, with transportation and liability concerns.

A fourth set of barriers that faced these projects was due to their rural context. As mentioned earlier, many of these projects had to contend with decades-long local history of populations and enrollments that were declining or at best growing more slowly than

state averages. Many also experienced persistent economic disparities compared to major metropolitan areas. Linked with this painful historical reality is the attitude widespread among many professional educators and community members alike that the only way to get ahead is to get out, the only way to get up is to get away from one's small towns beginnings. Accordingly, many school systems have operated as export industries, preparing and often encouraging students to leave. This, of course, can contribute to the downward spiral of a community and its school system. Choosing the other path -- to take pride in local assets, invest in local possibilities, and sink roots more deeply into a rural Minnesota community -- requires courage and imagination.

In the face of these obstacles, most of the teachers, administrators and community members playing leading roles in these projects were visionary, resourceful and tenacious. They found ways to cope with the tensions that come with being change agents in a system, and they solved myriad practical problems to put their ideas of school/community partnership and community-based learning into operation. We found that most leaders of successful school/community collaborative projects displayed these characteristics:

- **Skilled at dealing with ambiguity and complexity.** They operated on multiple levels, conceptual and operational. They could coordinate multiple, overlapping timelines. They could see the underlying unity among partners of different styles and interests. They could keep projects moving even when 20% of the details remained undefined.

- **Flexible in the face of unforeseen obstacles and opportunities.** When a trip or an event had to be re-scheduled, or if a community-based learning project ended sooner than expected, these leaders could quickly generate a Plan B. When retirees with Holocaust experience or urban exiles with videography skills moved into the community, these leaders found ways to plug them in.

- **Skilled at working with adults as well as children, and in teams as well as independently.** The teachers that thrived in these projects shifted easily between the structuring and defining roles more relevant with students and the inquiring and coordinating roles more relevant to their adult community partnerships. They could lead their own classroom but they also did joint planning, implementation and evaluation with other educators and community partners.

- **Possessing a rich network of community contacts, which they actively nurtured.** Leaders in these projects tended to be teachers and principals who had been in their community for 10 or more years, or business and civic leaders with deep roots in the community. Whether professional educators or other community members, these leaders were well-connected and widely respected in the community. They had access through personal relationships to various businesses, associations and organizations in the community to facilitate specific collaborative activities, or to communicate and dialogue about school/community collaborative possibilities.

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Fortunately, while getting school/community collaboratives started took a lot of extra effort, we saw that they became much easier to maintain and extend once they were underway. Word of mouth contacts, visibility in the community, and informal networks tended to generate additional prospective partners. Once a community person had served in an educational role once or twice, s/he could continue year after year with much less orientation and support required from the teacher, and the example could be used as a model to enlist and orient other community volunteers.

In reflecting on this network of projects, we explored whether features of local context were important factors in success or difficulty. We saw no major patterns differentiating progress between communities that were growing or shrinking, small or a bit larger, farming- or forestry- or tourism-based. It did appear that fear of school closure, triggered by enrollment and population declines, was a motivating factor fueling innovation in many places. Community leaders in very small communities, and those with declining population, seemed more aware of the potential of the school as a community asset and might have been more invested in making sure their school stayed viable. On another hand, momentum for innovation seemed more difficult to generate in some communities that had experienced long-term declines in their economy and population, and that had already lived through some school consolidations. In these communities, we saw more people who appeared to be weary and reluctant to stick their necks out; more people in a survival mode rather than a creative mode. In very small communities with strong leadership for educational innovation, that leadership often came from business owners and civic leaders who themselves had children in the local school – so that their motivations as parents and community leaders dovetailed.

Across these different contexts, what we saw and heard convinced us that assistance by the Center for School Change contributed to progress in these sites. The Center's statewide conferences provided exposure to new ideas and possible models, validation of progress made, and important opportunities for local change teams to gel and plan. CSC regional outreach staff played valuable roles by facilitating local planning and problem solving, providing specific on-site assistance and information for individual projects. Financial support from the Center for local innovation expenses also made a difference.

Rather than features of community context, it appeared that the following five lessons may have been most important in contributing to success among these projects. We recommend these as guidelines for future efforts in school/community collaboration:

1) **Time and patience are required to build the relationships necessary for strong school/community collaboration.** Projects typically underestimated the amount of time and attention required to build strong ownership, trust and participation by diverse stakeholders.

2) **Innovation and collaboration live in creative tension in these projects**. The best projects allowed creative innovators to put new ideas into action quickly and built broader ownership and stability through appropriate oversight, governance, and ongoing information sharing. Typically this meant forming a broad-based steering committee and giving core teachers freedom to innovate.

3) **Strong, supportive leadership by principals and superintendents contributes to success.** Determined teachers and citizens made progress without supportive school administrators in some sites, but had more difficulty. The most effective administrators played roles far more active than simply getting out of the way of innovative teachers and community members. Principals and superintendents can make valuable contributions by running interference with resistant individuals and policies within the school system, brokering connections and boosting understanding of the new approach in the community, and providing professional validation to the front-line innovative teachers.

4) **Starting small, with a single school or "school-within-a-school," may be best for generating momentum for school/community collaboration.** Focusing on one or a few do-able collaborative projects can make the most of limited initial energy. The working examples generated then become powerful teaching tools for moving the public dialogue on this topic, both in the community and within the school system. Some of the strongest projects had a single school, or a program within a school that involved a handful of teachers, at their core. Even successful K-12 ventures had a few "flagship" community partnership projects.

5) **Communities possess deep resources for leadership and teaching; the challenge is on educators to connect with these.** Projects thrived when they had active community leadership that provided vision to persevere through the practical and bureaucratic difficulties, and when they enlivened students' learning experiences through involvement of knowledgeable community members and topics. Teachers and administrators, as the people with day-to-day responsibility for guiding student learning, have the most power to tap or block these community resources.

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APPENDIX A: EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
JUNE 1998 DATA COLLECTION

As we begin, it would help if each of you would introduce yourselves and tell us briefly about the role you play with the project.

Setting the Stage:
Our purpose today is to find out about how things are going with your project. We are particularly interested in learning more about how your community and school are engaged in the educational process, how your partnerships are going and what you believe are some of the early lessons you may be learning about how to do this work. A good place to begin our discussion, we've found, is to find out about what you believe this project will accomplish.

1. What is your project designed to accomplish?

   Probes:
   - Why do you think this work is necessary and important?

Focus

2. Who is involved in your project?

   Probes:
   - What institutions or organizations are they associated with?
   - How representative are these various people, associations and institutions of the whole community?
   - What steps are being taken to improve diversity in the project's work?
   - What is their role?
   - Who is missing? Why?
   - How have you decided to work together?
     - ⇒ Decision-making?
     - ⇒ Roles?
     - ⇒ Planning

   - If we had asked you who was involved at the beginning of the project, would it be the same persons who are currently involved? Please explain.

3. What are the key things that have happened so far as a result of this project?

   Probes:
   - with schools
   - with communities
   - with students

4. To what extent have you made progress toward your goals?
   Probe:
   Change in community/school relationships?
   - What has supported that progress?
   - What has made the progress difficult?

5. What are some of the beginning lessons you are learning about this work?

   - What worked well about this project?
   - What do you think needs to be improved?
   - How will you use the lessons you are learning?
   - With whom will you share the lessons you are learning?

Wrap-up

7. What are your next steps?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Thank you!

Learning About School - Community Change: What's Our Story So Far?

Center for School Change Summer Workshop
June 22-24, 1998

Site name:

Your role:

1. **What is your project designed to accomplish?**

2. **Who is involved in your project?**

3. **What key things have happened so far as a result of this project?**

4. **What progress have you made so far toward your goals?**

5. **What are some of the beginning lessons you are learning about this work?**

6. **What are your next steps?**

Other comments, if any:
Your name (optional):

Learning About School/Community Change:
Key Questions for Rainbow Research Site Visits

A. Community Engagement

1,2. Who are the people, institutions, and associations directly engaged by this project? What are their roles?

People/Inst's/Assn's **Their roles**

3. To what extent are school employees, including non-teachers, becoming more involved in community projects and groups as an outgrowth of this project? Please give examples.

4. To what extent are the school's resources and facilities being used by and for benefit of the community and its businesses or institutions? Please give examples.

B. Community-based Education

1. How much of the curriculum draws or focuses on local community topics?

2. What are students doing in/with the community?

3. What's being produced, and how are these products being used?

4. What are students gaining from these experiences? What is its most important impact on them?

C. Quality of the School/Community Partnership

1. What do you see as the major strengths or assets of the project? How does it build on these?

2. What do you see as the major challenges or barriers facing the project? How does it address these? What kind of progress is being made to overcome them?

3. How does your project deal with different views? Give an example of how your project is responsive to at least two divergent views.

D. **Lessons**

1. What was most important, or surprising, about the initial implementation of the project plan?

2. What was harder than expected, or took more time?

3. Once people got engaged in the project, what kept them involved?

4. What would you do differently if you had it to do over again?

E. **Summary of Outcomes and Impacts**

1. In summary, what changes have occurred in
   a) the amount of time students spend learning in the community?

   b) the number and variety of people coming into the school to work with students?

   c) the ways that the community has become a focus of study within the classroom?

2. What difference is this project making for this community? What benefits has it delivered? What changes has it contributed to?

3. What difference is this project making for the school system? What benefits has it delivered? To what changes has it contributed?

Thank you!

Learning About School/Community Change:
Summary of Site Visit Findings
[project name, school name, community name, date of visit]

Persons interviewed:

Visited/debrief by:

Capsule description:

Comments are organized under the five categories of our site visit guide:

A. Community Engagement: Is your community more engaged in the educational process?
B. Community-based Education: Is the education of young people moving beyond the classroom into the community through this project?
C. School/Community Partnership: Is the quality of the school/community partnership improving?
D. Key lessons being learned
E. Summary of outcomes and impacts

A. **Community Engagement**

B. **Community-based Education**

C. **Quality of the School/Community Partnership**

D. **Lessons**

E. **Summary of Outcomes and Impacts**

For community:

For students:

For school system:

Learning About School/Community Change: Documenting the School/Community Relationship

To tell the story of your school change project, and understand its significance, it is important to have an accurate picture of the nature and extent of community engagement and community-based learning. Filling out the following matrices will help in making that picture precise. If you could give us the completed matrices when we make our site visit this spring, that would be wonderful. Feel free to use additional sheets of paper if necessary. Thank you!

A. Community Engagement in the Educational Process

Who are the many people, institutions, and associations are involved in the schools through this project? What roles are they playing? How much time or other resources are they committing?

Community participants	Role played	Resources Committed		
		Time (e.g. hrs/month)	$	Other
People:				
Institutions:				
Associations:				

(This provides information for questions A.1., A.2, and A.5 in the School/Community Partnership evaluation framework, "Checklist for Documenting Impact on School/Community Relationship.")

APPENDIX B: STUDENTWRITING ASSESSMENTS

Engaging students' writing skills was a priority academic goal for many schools in the Phase II network. This appendix assesses the progress that three schools - Fertile Beltrami, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo and Perham - made in their efforts to improve students' writing skills. Assessments were conducted by independent consultant David Evertz.

FERTILE-BELTRAMI STUDENT WRITING: SCORES, COMMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS

"Good writing is clear thinking made visible."

At its core, effective writing celebrates words and their power. It impacts the world around it by developing ideas, enjoyment, and opinion. Unfortunately, effective writing is extremely rare.

Effective written language is the goal of all writing instruction. Teaching students to write effectively is both a daunting challenge, and an opportunity to empower them to impact their world.

MY TASK

To read and score student writing samples from grades K -- 6 at Fertile-Beltrami. The writing samples were from the fall and spring of the 99-00 school year.

I was asked to address two questions:
1. Is there evidence of improvement in the student writing at Fertile-Beltrami; and,
2. What recommendations do I have on ways to further improve the teaching of writing to these students?

A CAVEAT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

When writing is measured by looking at two (or three) samples that all students wrote at essentially the same time, it becomes a "point in time" measurement. This is true even if the year was spent collecting portfolios, or encouraging a broad spectrum of writing. It is important to remember that all point in time assessment is only a snapshot of that particular moment. That is the reason that standardized achievement scores are reported as a range of scores (between X and X). Testers have a level of confidence that the actual score will fall somewhere in that range. In writing, I believe that level of confidence is lowered, for it is an activity significantly impacted by the emotions, mind and attitude of the writer at that specific "point in time".

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I make this point to lessen the importance of any particular student's ratings on these samples. There are a few students' writings that display little improvement, or even show decreased skill in the second sample. I would not want to assume that they in fact did not improve, or lost skill over the course of the year. Rather, I would suggest a need for more samples of writing to be considered.

PROCESS

Fertile-Beltrami supplied 536 writing samples, and separate Rubrics for Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd/4th, and 5th/6th grades. The Rubric creates a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 = Not Acceptable, 2 = Acceptable, 3 = Quality, and 4 = Outstanding (Kindergarten Rubric is only 1 – 3, combining Content and Organization).

I read all samples at least two times, using the Rubrics supplied for each grade level as my screen. At the Kindergarten and 1st grade level I assigned one Overall score for each writing sample consistent with the Rubric. For grades 2 – 6, I scored each writing sample on 5 scales, the four in the Rubric, **Mechanics; Content; Organization; Attributes**; and, an added **Overall Effectiveness** score.

The Tables for each class are attached. They provide individual scores, and an average score for each sample collection. In addition, there is a percentage of collective change over the course of the samples.

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Sample Table

#	First Name	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
2	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
3	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
4	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
5	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
6	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1
7	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	3	3	1
8	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
9	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
10	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
11	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
12	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
13	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	1
14	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
15	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
16	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
17	Xxxx	Xxxxxxx	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
18	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
19	Xxxxxx	Xxxxxxxxx	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
	Total Samples						19					19	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.0					2.684	.684

QUESTION 1: IS THERE EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT?

Yes. In several different measures, the collection of writing shows significant improvement between the first and second samples.

1. In the simple act of reading the first and second samples, significant improvement in the writings is evident. This "face validity" should be encouraging to the students, families and staff at the school.
2. In most instances, the second set of specimens are more complex, and display significantly higher order of writing in several areas: The length of the second sample is longer; most have multiple paragraphs; most provide multiple examples to support their statements; and, language selection is broader and more precise. While effective writing is often concise, in young students writing, length usually signifies increased ability to translate thoughts and ideas into words. At a more advanced stage, the ability to edit these ideas into shorter, polished gems will become more appropriate.
3. Not unexpectedly, the most significant gains are made in the primary grades, peaking in the 2nd grade.

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4. It should be noted that the second sample while of higher quality, tends to be less interesting to read. This is not surprising. As students learn new techniques and focus on expanding their writing, they tend to focus on these items, and lose some of the spontaneity that makes their writing interesting. Part of instruction is to assist students to incorporate these changes into their own style on a continual basis as they progress. I think of this as similar to teaching young people to bat a baseball. As you work on each step of the procedure, there is a period in which they get better on each segment, but the actual batting gets worse. Only as they are able to integrate all the pieces together, make it their "own", does the improvement show.
5. Selection of writing prompts can have a significant impact on the "interest" students have in their writing. The generic prompts used in these samples will not generate much excitement, and can negatively impact the results.
6. There are reasons to be concerned about the decreasing gains in grades 4 and 6, with a troubling blip appearing in the 5th grade, where writing scores actually decline. While this is driven by a small number of good writers who do very poorly on the second sample, there are few gains for any students in the scores.

QUESTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Writing

Clearly, the staff is doing some things very right. With this in mind, and without any clear idea of how they are teaching writing, I offer the following comments. If they are already doing all of this approaches, congratulations. If not, some of these ideas may prove useful.

1. Teachers of writing need to write.
2. Writing needs to happen often. If not daily, at least several times each week.
3. Building a strong system of support and encouragement is essential to getting children to write.
4. It is crucial to intersperse comments and skill teaching with praise for simply getting words on paper—a ratio of 5 – 1 is the minimum (I know this can be very challenging with struggling writers).
5. Keeping daily journals can be an effective way to do this. I would have journals checked only for compliance, not for content or mechanical proficiency.
6. Portfolio Assessment is the best way to gauge writing improvement. Students should complete a body of writing over a prolonged period of time (a school year). Portfolios typically include several types of writing, and teachers consider a student's entire portfolio--not just single assignments--providing a more naturalistic approach to teaching and evaluation.

7. Selection of samples for evaluation of writing should combine both student and staff selections. One way to do this is to have each student select their favorite piece of writing from the fall, winter and spring, and have the teacher do the same. This encourages students to take responsibility for choosing their own writing, and creates discussion points for students and staff about why certain selections were made.
8. Finally, what causes the deterioration in 5th grade? I have no answers, but suggest you ask the following questions: Is the timing of the sample a problem? What about the prompt, is it boring and lacking the ability to gain student interest? Do students wee these samples as important in their lives? Is there an overall attitude of "don't care" permeating the group? Have we done too little writing during the year, failing to maintain the "tool" of writing that was evident in the fall?

B. Rubric

The staff at Fertile-Beltrami should be commended for their work in developing the Rubrics. They capture many essentials of good writing. I have only two suggestions. My basic concern was the lack of an overall effectiveness component—which in my belief is what makes writing more than a collection of correct parts. It is entirely possible that the Overall score will be higher than the collection of individual scores.

I have some basic beliefs about the use of Rubrics:

- A Rubric needs to clearly state its intended outcome at the beginning.
- Rubrics should speak directly to the student, including having "student friendly" language, or at least a "student friendly" version.
- I believe an Overall Effectiveness scale (often called a "holistic" scale in the literature) is a valuable part of a writing Rubric.

I have the following suggestions.

- I found the Rubric at Kindergarten and 1st grade to provide little help in examining the writing. I originally scored these samples using the Rubric, and found it significantly undervalued the strong and remarkable growth evidenced by the students. I would re-write it so it makes sense to the students, and can be used with them to see their progress.
- I would examine the language on the "Content" sections. They seem to focus on structural elements more than ideas. Perhaps the structural elements could be included in the "Mechanics" section.

Kindergarten

#	First Name	Last Name	FALL 1	FALL 2	SPRING	CHANGE
1				3	3	0
2			2	3	2	-.5
3			2	2	2	0
4			2	1	2	.5
5			2	2	3	1
6			1	2		NA
7			2	1	2	.5
8			1			NA
9			2			NA
10			1	2	2	.5
11			2	3	3	.5
12			2	1		NA
13			2		3	1
14			2			NA
15			2	3	2	-.5
16			2	3	3	.5
17			1	2	3	1.5
18					2	NA
19			2	1	2	.5
20	X	X	1			NA
	Total Samples		18	14	14	
	AVERAGE SCORE		1.722	2.071	2.429	.5325

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Kindergarten

#	First Name	Last Name	FALL 1	Fall 2	SPRING	CHANGE
1			3	2	3	.5
2			2	1	3	1.5
3			2	2	3	1
4			2	2	3	1
5			2	2	2	0
6			2	2	3	1
7				2	2	0
8			2	2	3	1
9			2	2	2	0
10				2		NA
11			2	2		NA
12			2	2	3	1
13			2	2	3	1
14			1	2	2	.5
15			2			NA
16			2	2	2	0
17			2	2	2	0
18			2	2	2	0
19			1	2	3	1.5
20			2	2		NA
21				2		NA
	TOTAL SAMPLES		18	20	16	
	AVERAGE SCORES		1.944	1.950	2.563	.621

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1st Grade

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL	SPRING	CHANGE**
1				2	NA
2			1	2	1
3			1	2	1
4			1	2	1
5			1	2	1
6			1	1.5	.5
7			1	2	1
8			1	1	0
9			1	2	1
10			1	2	1
11			2	2	0
12			1	2.5	1.5
13			2	2	0
14				2.5	NA
15			2	2	0
16			1		NA
17			1	2	1
	TOTAL SAMPLES		15	16	
	AVERAGE SCORE **		1.200	1.969	.625

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1st Grade

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL	SPRING	CHANGE
1			1	2	1
2			1	2	1
3			1		NA
4			1	2	1
5			1	2	1
6			1	2	1
7			NA	2	NA
8			1	2	1
9			1	2	1
10			1	2	1
11			1	1.5	.5
12			1	2	1
13			NA	2	NA
14			1	2	1
15			1	2	1
16			1	2	1
17			1	2	1
18			1	2	1
	TOTAL SAMPLES		16	17	
	AVERAGE SCORE		1.0	1.970	.853

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2nd Grade – B

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			1	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	3	2
2			1	2	1	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
3			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
4			1	2	1	2	2	3	4	3	4	3	1
5			2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
6			1	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	3	2
7			2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
8			1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
9			1	2	1	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
10			1	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
11			1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
12			1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	1
13			1	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	3	2
14			1	2	1	1	1					NA	
15			1	2	1	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	2
16			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
17			1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	1
18			2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
19			1	2	1	1	1	3	4	3	3	3	2
20			1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
21			1	1	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	3	2
22			1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
23			1	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
24			1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	2
	Total Samples						24					23	
	AVERAGE SCORES						1.666					3.000	1.261

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2 (listed as 2nd grade in fall, 3rd grade in spring sample)

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			3	3	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	1
2							NA	2	2	2	2	2	NA
3			1	1	1	1	1					NA	
4			1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
5			1	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1
6							NA	2	3	2	2	2	NA
7			0	1	0	1	1					NA	
8			1	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	3
9			0	1	0	1	1					NA	
10			1	2	1	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	2
11			1	1	1	1	1					NA	
12			3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	0
13			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	1
14			3	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
15			2	2	2	2	2					NA	
16			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
17			2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
18			0	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1
	Total Samples						16					14	
	AVERAGE SCORES						1.563					2.500	1.090

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3 – O

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
2			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
3			2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
4			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
5			2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
6			2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1
7			2	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	3	3	1
8			2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
9			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
10			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
11			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
12			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
13			2	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	1
14			3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
15			3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
16			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
17			2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
18			2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
19			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
	Total Samples						19					19	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.0					2.684	.684

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4 – N

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	0
2			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
3			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
4			2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	-1
5			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
6			1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
7			3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
8			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	0
9								1	2	2	2	2	NA
10								3	4	3	3	3	NA
11			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
12			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
13			2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
14			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
15			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
16			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
17			2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	1
18			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
19			2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	1
20			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
21			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
22			1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
23			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
24			2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
	Total Samples						22					24	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.182					2.25	.045

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4

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
2			2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
3			1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
4			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
5			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
6			2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
7			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
8			1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
9			2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
10			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
11			1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
12			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
13			1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
14			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
15			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
16			1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	0
17			2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
18			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
19			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	0
20			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
21			3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
22			3	3	3	3	3						NA
23			2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
24			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
	Total Samples						24					23	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.083					2.217	.217

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5 – CT

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
2			2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
3			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
4			2	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	1
5			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
6			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
7			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
8			2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
9			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
10			2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
11			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	0
12			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
13			3	3	3	3	3						
14			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
15			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
16			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
17			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
18			1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	0
19			3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	-1
20			2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
21			2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
22			2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
23			1	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
24								1	1	1	1	1	NA
25			2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
26			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
27			3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
	Total Samples						27					26	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.444					2.269	-0.19

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5

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			3	4	4	4	4	2	3	2	2	2	-2
2			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0
3			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	-1
4			2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
5			2	2	2	3	2						NA
6			3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
7			3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
8			2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
9			3	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	-1
10			3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	0
11			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
12			2	2	2	2	2						NA
13			3	4	4	3	4	2	2	2	2	2	-2
14			2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	-1
15			1	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	0
16			2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
17			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	1
18			3	3	3	3	3						NA
19			2	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	-1
20			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
21			2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
22			1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
23			2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	0
24			2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	0
25			3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	0
	Total Samples						25					22	
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.64					2.318	-0.36

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6

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			2	2	3	3	2						
2			2	2	2	2	2						
3			2	2	2	2	2						
4			3	3	3	3	3						
5			2	2	2	2	2						
6			2	2	2	2	2						
7			2	3	3	3	3						
8			2	2	2	2	2						
9			3	3	3	3	3						
10			3	3	3	3	3						
11			3	3	3	3	3						
12			3	3	3	3	3						
13			2	3	3	3	3						
14			3	3	3	3	3						
15			2	2	2	2	2						
16			2	2	2	2	2						
17			2	2	2	2	2						
18			2	3	2	2	2						
19			1	2	2	2	2						
20			2	3	3	3	3						
21			3	3	3	3	3						
22			2	2	2	2	2						
23			2	3	2	3	3						
	Total Samples						23						
	AVERAGE SCORES						2.478						

No Data

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6 – K

#	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	FALL					SPRING					CHANGE
			M	C	O	A	Overall	M	C	O	A	Overall	
1			2	2	2	2	**2**	2	3	3	3	**3**	1
2			2	2	3	3	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
3			2	3	2	2	**2**	3	3	3	3	**3**	1
4			2	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
5			2	3	3	3	**3**	3	3	3	3	**3**	0
6			2	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
7			1	3	2	2	**2**	3	3	3	3	**3**	1
8			1	3	2	2	**2**	2	3	2	2	**2**	0
9			3	3	3	3	**3**	2	3	3	3	**3**	0
10			1	3	2	2	**2**	3	4	4	4	**4**	2
11			3	3	3	3	**3**	3	3	3	3	**3**	0
12			2	3	3	3	**3**	3	3	3	3	**3**	0
13			1	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
14			2	3	3	3	**3**	2	2	2	3	**2**	-1
15			2	3	2	2	**2**	3	4	3	3	**3**	1
16			1	2	2	2	**2**	1	2	2	2	**2**	0
17			1	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
18			2	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
19			2	2	2	2	**2**	3	3	3	3	**3**	1
20			3	3	3	3	**3**	3	4	3	3	**3**	0
21			2	3	2	3	**3**	2	4	3	3	**3**	0
22			1	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
23			2	2	2	2	**2**	2	2	2	2	**2**	0
	Total Samples						**23**					**23**	
	Average Scores						**2.30**					**2.565**	**0.26**

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WARREN-ALVARADO-OSLO STUDENT WRITING:

Scores, Comments, Recommendations

"Good writing is clear thinking made visible."

At its core, effective writing celebrates words and their power. It impacts the world around it by developing ideas, enjoyment, and opinion. Unfortunately, effective writing is extremely rare.

Effective written language is the goal of all writing instruction. Teaching students to write effectively is both a daunting challenge, and an opportunity to empower them to impact their world.

MY TASK

To read and score student writing samples from secondary students at Warren-Alvarado-Oslo. The writing samples were from the fall and spring of the 99-00 school year.

I was asked to address two questions:

1. Is there evidence of improvement in the student writing at Warren-Alvarado-Oslo; and,
2. What recommendations do I have on ways to further improve the teaching of writing to these students?

A CAVEAT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

When writing is measured by looking at three samples that all students wrote at essentially the same time, it becomes a "point in time" measurement. This is true even if the year was spent collecting portfolios, or encouraging a broad spectrum of writing. It is important to remember that all point in time assessment is only a snapshot of that particular moment. That is the reason that standardized achievement scores are reported as a range of scores (between X and X). Testers have a level of confidence that the actual score will fall somewhere in that range. In writing, I believe that level of confidence is lowered, for it is an activity significantly impacted by the emotions, mind and attitude of the writer at that specific "point in time".

I make this point to lessen the importance of any particular student's ratings on these samples. There are a few students' writings that display little improvement, or even show decreased skill in the second sample. I would not want to assume that they in fact did not improve, or lost skill over the course of the year. Rather, I would suggest a need for more samples of writing to be considered.

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PROCESS

Warren-Alvarado-Oslo supplied 23 matched writing samples, and on unmatched sample. A Rubric for combined grades was also provided. The Rubric is lengthy, with 10 scales: **Creativity; Purpose; Development & Completeness; Coherence; Word Usage/Audience; Sentences; Capitalization; Spelling; Punctuation; Format;** and, **Content.** The Rubric has a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 = Not Acceptable, 2 = Acceptable, 3 = Quality, and 4 = Professional.

I read all samples at least two times, using the Rubric supplied for each grade level as my screen. Each sample was scored on all 11 categories, and then given an overall score. The Overall Score is used to measure the gross change from sample 1 to sample 2.

The attached Table provides individual scores for each student on each of the 11 scales, and the Overall Score. A change score for each student measuring improvement between the samples is also included. Please note, that the scales are not individually well reflected in this "rough" change score and need to be examined for individual strengths and weaknesses. The Table also provides Group Averages for each sample.

QUESTION 1: IS THERE EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT?

Yes. In several different measures, the collection of writing shows significant improvement between the first and second samples.

1. In the simple act of reading the grouped samples for each student, significant improvement in the writing is evident. These are letters you could be proud to send off! This "face validity" should be encouraging to the students, families and staff at the school.
2. In most instances, the samples are progressively more complex, and display significantly higher order of writing in several areas: The length of the second sample is longer; most have multiple paragraphs; most provide multiple examples to support their statements; and, language selection is broader and more precise. While effective writing is often concise, in student writing, length usually signifies increased ability to translate thoughts and ideas into words. It should be noted that the second sample is much more compelling to read than the first. Not only is it of generally higher quality, it addresses real issues in their lives. Writing about real life, and using writing to convey real thoughts and feelings is a strong motivator to all of us. Selection of writing prompts can have a significant impact on the "interest" students have in their writing, these prompts seem to do that.
3. Overall the writing shows that **all students have reached an acceptable level of writing**. A few students are advanced, clearly displaying an ability to use language to communicate more than basic ideas.

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QUESTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS

C. A. Writing

Clearly, the staff is doing some things very right. With this in mind, and without any clear idea of how they are teaching writing, I offer the following comments. If they are already doing all of this approaches, congratulations. If not, some of these ideas may prove useful.

1. I really like the use of writing to provide real life communication.
2. Teachers of writing need to write.
3. Writing needs to happen often. If not daily, at least several times each week.
4. Building a strong system of support and encouragement is essential to getting children to write.
5. It is crucial to intersperse comments and skill teaching with praise for simply getting words on paper—a ratio of 5 – 1 is the minimum (I know this can be very challenging with struggling writers).
6. Keeping daily journals can be an effective way to do this. I would have journals checked only for compliance, not for content or mechanical proficiency.
7. Portfolio Assessment is the best way to gauge writing improvement. Students should complete a body of writing over a prolonged period of time (a school year). Portfolios typically include several types of writing, and teachers consider a student's entire portfolio--not just single assignments--providing a more naturalistic approach to teaching and evaluation.
8. Selection of samples for evaluation of writing should combine both student and staff selections. One way to do this is to have each student select their favorite piece of writing from the fall, winter and spring, and have the teacher do the same. This encourages students to take responsibility for choosing their own writing, and creates discussion points for students and staff about why certain selections were made.

D. B. Rubric

The staff at Warren-Alvarado-Oslo should be commended for their work in developing their Rubric. They capture many essentials of good writing. I do have two suggestions.

- There needs to be an overall effectiveness component (often called a "holistic" scale in the literature) —which I believe makes writing more than a collection of correct parts. It is entirely possible that the Overall score will be higher than the collection of individual scores.
- The Rubric is broken down into too many components. All of the elements are important, but need to be grouped together more efficiently. I was particularly concerned that A number of mechanical functions had their won scale.

I have some basic beliefs about the use of Rubrics:

1. A Rubric needs to clearly state its intended outcome at the beginning.
2. Rubrics should speak directly to the student, including having "student friendly" language, or at least a "student friendly" version.

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#	First	Last Name	FALL												SPRING											CHANGE
			Creativity	Purpose	Dev/Complete	Coherence	Word Use/Aud	Sentences	Capital.	Spell	Punctuation	Format	Content	Overall	Creativity	Purpose	Dev/Complete	Coherence	Word Use/Aud	Sentences	Capital.	Spell	Punctuation	Format	Content	Overallvv	
1			2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	0
2			2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
3			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
4			2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
5			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	1
6			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	0
7			3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
8			2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
9			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1
10			2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	0
11			2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-1
12			2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
13			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	0
14			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
15			1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
16			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
17			2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
18			2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
19			1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
20			2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
21			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	0
22			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	0
23			2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	0
24			N	O		M	A	T	C	H																	
Total Samples														23												23	
AVERAGE SCORES														2.09												2.35	0.26

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PERHAM STUDENT WRITING:

SCORES, COMMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS

"Good writing is clear thinking made visible."

At its core, effective writing celebrates words and their power. It impacts the world around it by developing ideas, enjoyment, and opinion. Unfortunately, effective writing is extremely rare.

Effective written language is the goal of all writing instruction. Teaching students to write effectively is both a daunting challenge, and an opportunity to empower them to impact their world.

MY TASK

To read and score student writing samples from secondary students at Perham TFTF. The writing samples were from the fall, mid-year, and spring of the 99-00 school year.

I was asked to address two questions:

1. Is there evidence of improvement in the student writing at Perham TFTF; and,
2. What recommendations do I have on ways to further improve the teaching of writing to these students?

A CAVEAT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

When writing is measured by looking at three samples that all students wrote at essentially the same time, it becomes a "point in time" measurement. This is true even if the year was spent collecting portfolios, or encouraging a broad spectrum of writing. It is important to remember that all point in time assessment is only a snapshot of that particular moment. That is the reason that standardized achievement scores are reported as a range of scores (between X and X). Testers have a level of confidence that the actual score will fall somewhere in that range. In writing, I believe that level of confidence is lowered, for it is an activity significantly impacted by the emotions, mind and attitude of the writer at that specific "point in time".

I make this point to lessen the importance of any particular student's ratings on these samples. There are a few students' writings that display little improvement, or even show decreased skill in the second sample. I would not want to assume that they in fact did not improve, or lost skill over the course of the year. Rather, I would suggest a need for more samples of writing to be considered.

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PROCESS

Perham supplied 103 matched writing samples, and an additional 17 samples that were not matched (or at least I could not match the unsigned handwriting). A Rubric for combined grades was also provided: **Message Development; Adaptation to Audience and Situation; Organization; Language Choices;** and, **Delivery**. The Rubric creates a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 reflects entry level and 4 is exceptional.

I read all samples at least two times, using the Rubric supplied for each grade level as my screen. I then ranked each of the three samples on an overall effectiveness level, using the 1 (entry level) through 4 (exceptional) scale.

The attached Table provides individual scores for each student, and an average score for each student. It also provides Group Averages for each sample.

QUESTION 1: IS THERE EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT?

Yes. In several different measures, the collection of writing shows significant improvement between the first, second, and third samples.

1. In the simple act of reading the grouped samples for each student, significant improvement in the writing is evident. This "face validity" should be encouraging to the students, families and staff at the school.
2. In most instances, the samples are progressively more complex, and display significantly higher order of writing in several areas: The length of the second and third sample is longer; most have multiple paragraphs; most provide multiple examples to support their statements; and, language selection is broader and more precise. While effective writing is often concise, in student writing, length usually signifies increased ability to translate thoughts and ideas into words. At a more advanced stage, the ability to edit these ideas into shorter, polished gems will become more appropriate.
3. It should be noted that the second sample is much more compelling to read than the first. Not only is it of generally higher quality, it addresses real issues in their lives. Writing about real life, and using writing to convey real thoughts and feelings is a strong motivator to all of us. Selection of writing prompts can have a significant impact on the "interest" students have in their writing.
4. The third sample is a little less focused, while incorporating higher-level organization and language usage. As students learn new techniques and focus on expanding their writing, they tend to focus on these items, and lose some of the spontaneity that makes their writing interesting. Part of instruction is to assist students to incorporate these changes into their own style on a continual basis as they progress. I think of this as similar to teaching young people to bat a softball. As you work on each step of the procedure, there is a period in which

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they get better on each segment, but the actual batting gets worse. Only as they are able to integrate all the pieces together, make it their "own", does the improvement show.

5. Overall the writing shows the majority of students reaching an acceptable level of writing. A few students are significantly behind using language in a way that will assist them in life. Specific focus needs to be put on their ability to generate writing skills that will serve their continuing needs. An equal number of students are advanced, clearly displaying an ability to use language to communicate more than basic ideas.

QUESTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS

E. A. Writing

Clearly, the staff is doing some things very right. With this in mind, and without any clear idea of how they are teaching writing, I offer the following comments. If they are already doing all of this approaches, congratulations. If not, some of these ideas may prove useful.

1. I really like the use of writing to provide real life communication (sample three).
2. Teachers of writing need to write.
3. Writing needs to happen often. If not daily, at least several times each week.
4. Building a strong system of support and encouragement is essential to getting children to write.
5. It is crucial to intersperse comments and skill teaching with praise for simply getting words on paper—a ratio of 5 – 1 is the minimum (I know this can be very challenging with struggling writers).
6. Keeping daily journals can be an effective way to do this. I would have journals checked only for compliance, not for content or mechanical proficiency.
7. Portfolio Assessment is the best way to gauge writing improvement. Students should complete a body of writing over a prolonged period of time (a school year). Portfolios typically include several types of writing, and teachers consider a student's entire portfolio--not just single assignments--providing a more naturalistic approach to teaching and evaluation.
8. Selection of samples for evaluation of writing should combine both student and staff selections. One way to do this is to have each student select their favorite piece of writing from the fall, winter and spring, and have the teacher do the same. This encourages students to take responsibility for choosing their own writing, and creates discussion points for students and staff about why certain selections were made.

F. B. Rubric

The staff at Perham TFTF should be commended for their work in developing their Rubric. They capture many essentials of good writing. I have only two suggestions. My basic concern was the lack of an overall effectiveness component—which in my

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belief is what makes writing more than a collection of correct parts. It is entirely possible that the Overall score will be higher than the collection of individual scores.

I have some basic beliefs about the use of Rubrics:

1. A Rubric needs to clearly state its intended outcome at the beginning.
2. Rubrics should speak directly to the student, including having "student friendly" language, or at least a "student friendly" version.
3. I believe an Overall Effectiveness scale (often called a "holistic" scale in the literature is a valuable part of a writing Rubric.

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#	First Name	Last Name	FALL	MID-YEAR	SPRING	Avg. Score
1			2	2	2	2
2			2	2	3	2.333
3			2	2	2	2
4			2	2	2	2
5			2	2	2	2
6			2	2	2	2
7			3	3	X	3
8			2	2	2	2
9			2	2	X	2
10			3	3	4	3.333
11			2	3	3	2.666
12			2	2	2	2
13			2	2	1	1.667
14			2	2	2	2
15			2	3	3	2.667
16			2	X	2	2
17			1	2	2	1.667
18			2	2	2	2
19			2	2	X	2
20			2	3	2	2.333
21			2	2	2	2
			2	3	3	2.667
			3	2	2	2.333
			2	4	4	3.333
			2	3	3	2.667
			3	3	2	2.667
			3	3	3	3
			2	2	3	2.333
			2	2	3	2.333
			3	3	3	3
			2	2	2	2
			2	2	2	2
			2	1	X	1.5
			3	3	X	3
			2	2	2	2
			2	2	2	2
	Total Samples		18	20	16	
	AVERAGE SCORES		**1.944**	**1.950**	**2.563**	

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APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT SUMMARIES

This appendix describes the results of various standardized tests in communities which used such tests to help measure progress. It was written by independent evaluation consultant Ron Newell (on the education faculty of MSU-Mankato).

Brainerd Mississippi Horizons
1999-2000 Standardized Test Analysis

The Study
The students at Mississippi Horizons Middle School in the sixth, seventh and ninth grades are tested by the Iowa Basic Skills Test (ITBS) Reading, Language Usage, and Math. Eighth graders are tested in the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests (MCA) for Reading and Math. The tests in this year represent the first time scores could be reported for the same classes or group for comparison. That class is the 1999-2000 seventh graders who came into the program as sixth graders and were tested first in October of the year 1998.

Limitations
Mississippi Horizons has the advantage of having a larger sample from which to aggregate scores (there are over 100 students in each grade). Therefore there is no sample size limitation. The only limitations are only one class that has pre-test and post-test data, and that over the course of a year and a half; and that standardized tests do not measure all the gains expected of students in the program.

Report of the Data
The MCA data on the Mississippi Horizons eighth graders shows that 87% of the students passed the Reading test at or above scale score 600. This is in contrast to the district-wide score of 79% and the statewide score of 80%. In Mathematics, the Mississippi Horizons students had 79% pass the test at or above the scale, while the district-wide score was 75% and the statewide score was 71%. Results from the past year (with this year's ninth grade) were 80% in Reading and 78% in Math. Both last year's group and this year's group were above the state and district percentages.

As mentioned above, one group or class has two sets of ITBS scores to compare. The present seventh grade took the battery of tests in October of 1998 as sixth graders, and again in March of 2000 as seventh graders. Following are the results, given in GE (grade equivalency) and PR (national percentile rank):

	Reading	Language	Math	Battery Total
Oct. 98	6.6/57%	6.1/48%	7.1/64%	6.5/56%
Mar. 00	8.4/57%	7.7/49%	9.2/65%	8.4/56%

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Other scores reported included the scores for the ninth graders who were in the program for two years and who are no longer at Mississippi Horizons, but are included for comparison; and the 2000 ninth graders, who have been in the program for three years.

	Reading	Language	Math	Battery Total
2 Years	12.1/69%	12.5/66%	12.8/72%	12.5/71%
3 Years	12.1/69%	PHS/73%	PHS/84%	PHS/78%

(PHS = Post High School)

Analysis of Results

As pointed out in the 1999 report, the Mississippi Horizons middle school students are an outstanding group. The eighth grade scores on the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement tests for two years in a row have been slightly higher than the district and state averages. This coupled with the outstanding scores on the ITBS, where in all cases except one the groups are ranked in percentile scores much ahead of national peers, are evidence enough of the good work that is done at the school. And, the fact that the 2000 ninth graders had national grade equivalencies of post high school in three categories, and 12.1 in the other, indicates an outstanding group of students who have had an outstanding opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge measured on these tests.

The one class that has two scores to compare, the 2000 seventh graders, who had 14 months between tests (Oct. 1998-Mar. 2000), can be used to show if the program is making dramatic differences in students. As can be seen by the table above, no dramatic gains can be seen. However, there have been percentile gains in two areas; from 48-49% in language, and 64-65% in math.

If fourteen months of school equal 1.5 in grade equivalency, then it can be said that their was an aggregate rise in each of the batteries above expectation; 1.8 GE in Reading, 1.6 GE in Language, 2.1 GE in Math, and 1.9 GE in the overall battery. These are small gains, but gains nonetheless.

One factor stands out year after year; the Mississippi Horizons students consistently have higher than average aggregate scores in Mathematics tests of skill. This obviously speaks well of the teachers and the program that these scores are maintained for at least three years of testing. The Reading test scores are also quite good in relation to national norms. Mississippi Horizons Middle School's standardized test scores exhibit an excellent program.

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Mankato Bridges Elementary
Standardized Test Analysis, 2000

The Study

The Bridges Elementary staff opted to give the Terra Nova Achievement and Cognitive Abilities test to second and fourth graders, and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment tests to the third and fifth graders. The batteries taken in the Terra Nova are Reading, Language and Mathematics; the areas covered by the MCA's are Reading, Mathematics and Writing (fifth grade only). From the tests, individual and group percentiles and average scores can be compared with other state or nationwide students, as well as be used for individual comparisons to document growth of basic skills.

The tests were administered once each, so there is no pre-test and post-test data for the year 2000-2001. However, the Terra Nova scores can be compared on each of the batteries over the next few years so that longitudinal data can be kept on each child. There will be no reporting of the Cognitive Abilities scores at this time. When longitudinal data is used in the future, then more comparisons can be done.

For the purposes of this report, the average national percentile and grade equivalency averages for second and fourth graders are reported to give a sense or feel for the effects of the program. And, the MCA average score and percentage of students in each of four levels will be reported for both the third and fifth grades. In future reports, individual student growth can be monitored.

Limitations

The extremely small sample size in this case makes judgments about program very difficult. There are only 6, 8, 11 and 13 students in the four groups tested. As will be shown, a large number of extremely gifted students has created a very high average national percentile and grade equivalency average for the second grade group. The fourth grade group has eight students, and three of them are as high functioning as the six second graders. However, with just the affect of a few students with academic deficiencies, there is a considerable difference in the averages.

This should not be interpreted as a failure on the part of the staff or program. When individual growth can be documented, then a more realistic estimate of program affects may be made.

The Results

The second grade group is indeed a special group of (6) students. In the Terra Nova test of achievement, the group averaged 90.3% in Reading, 87.3% in Language, 93.8% in Mathematics, with a total battery percentile of 93.3. In grade

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equivalencies, the second graders have, as an average, a GE of 5.9 in Reading, 6.8 in Language, 5.4 in Mathematics and a Total of 5.6 GE.

The fourth grader percentile ranks, as an average of the whole group (8), are 48.6% in Reading, 50.9% in Language, 62.8% in Mathematics, with a Total of 53.6%. Two of these fourth graders have total battery percentiles in excess of 90%, one is at 75%, two are about average, two with percentiles in the 30's, and one at 4%. Obviously, this is quite a mixed group. On grade equivalencies, this group averages 4.3 in Reading, 5.2 in Language, and 5.5 in Mathematics, with a Total GE of 4.9 (average for this age group).

As for the groups that took the MCA tests, the third graders, in Math, had none in Level I, 8% in Level II, 72% in Level III and 15% in Level IV. This means that 87% have better than average math skills. The average score for this group in Math was 1624, whereas the state average score was 1478 and the district (Mankato) average score was 1503. In Reading, the third graders had none in Level I, 8% in Level II, 42% in Level III and 50% in Level IV. Ninety two percent of the third graders have better than average reading skills. The Reading average score for Bridges Elementary third graders was 1668, while the state average was 1461 and the district average was 1512.

The fifth graders had 11% in Level I, 22% in Level II, 33% in Level III and 35% in Level IV in the Math assessment. Sixty eight percent of the students have better than average Math skills as assessed by this test. Their average score was 1558, the state's 1470 and the district's 1482. In Reading, the fifth grade had 30% in Level I, none in Level II, 40% in Level III and 30% in Level IV. Seventy percent of these students have better than average skills in reading. The school average score for the Bridges group was 1547, for the state 1493, and for the district 1546. In Writing, the Bridges group had none in Level I, 70% in Level II, 30% in Level III and none in Level IV. There was no average scores given in Writing.

Analysis of the Results

It is obvious by the scores reported that the second grade students at Bridges Elementary are a very high functioning group. Is this due to Nature, or Nurture? As this test was given in October of 2000, after these students just started school at Bridges, the school program cannot take credit for them. In fact, they will be challenged mightily to keep these precocious youngsters at their already high peak of achievement. That test data cannot be used to assess the program. In the future it will be of value to see what does happen to this group of six students. They cannot very well improve much in relation to national percentiles, as they are already near the ceiling, but they should be able to maintain these high profiles.

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The fourth grade group appears to offer more challenges, especially in the four students who are below national average percentiles. Again, if these four can show gains in percentiles and grade equivalencies over the years, then one can say the program is doing an excellent job of helping children gain basic skills. At this time the Terra Nova results can only set a baseline for recording future individual and group gains.

The MCA tests, on the other hand, were given in March of 2000, after students had been at Bridges school for seven months. The fact that the third and fifth graders scored exceedingly well on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment test show that the Bridges staff did very well to help students either gain or maintain basic skills in reading and math. The fact that the Bridges third grade group outperformed the state and other district elementary school groups by almost 100-150 points, and the fifth grade group outperformed their counterparts by 50-75 points, is indicative of a well functioning program.

The fifth grade writing assessment shows, though, that the Bridges school staff does have some work to do. This is the same group that outperformed their peers by large margins in reading, yet they are fairly average in writing skills.

From what data has been given, the Bridges Elementary program has drawn many outstanding students, and appears to be able to help those students maintain and develop basic skills beyond the average. There may very well be other positive gains in other than standardized test scores to also be used to judge the program, in which case much can be said for the accomplishments of the staff and students in the their first year.

Buffalo Discovery Elementary
Analysis of Standardized Scores 1999-2000

The Study

The staff at Discovery Elementary in Buffalo has chosen to utilize three separate standardized measures of student learning. Those measures are: the Degree of Reading Power, administered at each grade level beginning with second; the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests, administered to third and fifth graders; and the Iowa Basic Skills Test, administered to second and fourth graders. The Buffalo district uses all three of the measures, and has comparisons for each of the elementary schools in the district. Therefore, Discovery Elementary has a good account of where their students stand in relation to other students in the district, the state and the nation.

The staff at Discovery has done well in keeping individual records for the purpose of tracking individual progress throughout the program. However, even though scores on the DRP are available for each of the last three years, it cannot be used as a direct comparison using raw scores as each of the examinations test for different items. But,

it is possible to see changes in national percentile ranks on the DRP among individual students.

It will be possible to track individual growth in the ITBS in another two years when the 2000-second graders take it as fourth graders. This year's fourth graders did not take the ITBS as second graders, so such a comparison will have to wait another two years.

Limitations
As always, when the numbers are low for any class, students who have a higher or lower than usual score can make a huge difference in the aggregate raw score mean and percentiles. However, this limitation can be overcome with individual percentile comparisons from year to year. Then a particular student's growth can be seen, not just in raw score (all scores generally go up, as there are more items in later tests), but in how the individuals grew in comparison to their counterparts across the country.

The individual growth on the ITBS and MCA tests cannot be measured as of yet, but comparisons can be done from one grade to another to see how the general school population is doing. This kind of comparison has the limitation of not taking into account the different types of students that may typically inhabit a particular class. For example, the 1998-1999 fifth grade at Discovery scored extremely high on the MCA's. This year's fifth grade, however, has five more special needs children. Therefore, their aggregate scores are down. This should not reflect upon the teachers or the program. When it can be shown that a number of special needs children either improve or not improve their scores over time, then perhaps a judgment can be made.

Report of the Data
The second grade at Discovery took the Degree of Reading Power (DRP) test for the first time in October of 2000. Of the 27 students, 24 (88.9%) scored at or higher than national norms. Only three (11.1%) scored below national norms.

The third grade has scores from the last two years. Therefore, an analysis of individual student's percentile rank scores for the past two years was carried out. Of the 18 students who had scores for both years, 12 had positive gains in percentile rank, with an average gain of 15.3%! Only six students saw their percentile rank go down, with an average of 9.6%. Three of the students who lost percentile points were still in the 94th percentile or higher. The class as a whole, counting only those who were in both groups, showed an overall gain in aggregate DRP percentile rank from 64.7% to 68.0%.

The same analysis of the fourth grade was also carried out. Twenty students had scores from the past two years. Of the twenty, 10 had positive gains in percentile rank, 10 had losses of percentile rank. The average loss was 17.1%, the average gain was 17.3%. One student went from a 96% to a 55%, while another went from a 64% to a 98%. There is no explanation as to why so many exhibited gains or losses of such magnitude. The fourth grade aggregate percentile rank for 1999 was 62.5%, and the 2000 percentile rank was 64.1%.

The same procedure was used for the 2000 fifth graders. Of 22 students, 13 showed a positive gain in percentile rank, 9 loss of percentile rank. The average gain was 8.5%, the average loss was 11.0%. Overall, the aggregate percentile rank for the fifth grade (68.1%) stayed the same from 1999 to 2000.

All of the Discovery Elementary grades except the fourth scored higher in raw scores than their district counterparts in other elementary schools. The fourth grade raw score equaled the rest of the district schools. Also, the raw scores at Discovery Elementary have been going up each year. In 1999 the second grade scored an average score of 36 on the DRP. The second graders of 2000 scored an average of 47. The third grade scores went from 49-51, the fourth grade scores from 58-59.

The third and fifth grades also took the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Test. The third grade had 77% score at level 3-4 in Math, and 52% score at level 3-4 in Reading. All of the third graders scored in level 2-4 in Math, while 87% scored in level 2-4 in Reading. The average Math score for the third grade was 1564. The district Math score was 1522, and the state was 1478. The Reading score for Discovery was 1491, the district score was 1485, and the state average was 1461.

The fifth grade had 56% score at level 3-4 in Math, 64% at level 3-4 in Reading, but only 33% at level 3-4 in Writing. However, 92% scored at levels 2-4 in both Math and Reading, and 96% scored at levels 2-4 in Writing. The Math score for Discovery was 1507, the district was 1509 and the state was 1470. The Reading score for Discovery was 1522, the district 1505 and the state was 1493. No scores are given on the Writing portion.

The second graders and the fourth graders took the Iowa Basic Skills Test in October of 1999. The Second grade took the Reading, Language Usage and Math portions, with totals in those three areas and general battery totals given in national percentile ranks and grade equivalents. As the whole district took the batteries, a comparison can be shown.

Second Grade	Reading	Language	Math	Total
Discovery	67/2.7	59/2.4	55/2.3	58/2.4
District	59/2.4	59/2.4	55/2.3	55/2.3

Fourth Grade	Rdg.	Lang	Math	Social	Science	Inform.	Core Total
Discovery	68/5.0	58/4.5	81/5.5	61/4.7	71/5.2	70/5.0	67/4.8
District	62/4.6	58/4.5	72/4.9	53/4.3	65/4.9	60/4.5	61/4.6

As can be seen in the above chart, both the Buffalo district as a whole and Discovery Elementary students do extremely well on the national tests. And, equally as obvious, Discovery Elementary students outperform their counterparts in the rest of the district on almost all batteries. As these tests were taken in October of 1999, the second

grade average GE for the nationally normed group would be 2.2, and the fourth grade average would be 4.2.

As the fourth grade did not take the ITBS as second graders, there is no longitudinal data for comparison of individuals at this time.

Analysis of the Data

When considering the Degree of Reading Power statistics, one thing should clearly jump out at the reader: the fact that all of the Discovery Elementary groups are far above the national norm. The second graders, who have been in the program from kindergarten, as a group were at the 81st percentile on the DRP. This is phenomenal, when considering there are 27 children in the group. The third grade percentile rank as a group was at 68%, the fourth was at 64.1% and the fifth was at 68.1%. Also, the Discovery classes outperformed the other district elementary schools in the DRP. And, it appears as if most students are gaining ground on their national peers, as the third and fourth graders improved in percentile rank for the past year. By staying even, one could assume the reading program is working. If the group is gaining in percentile rank, they are increasing their skills at a greater ate than other students taking the test. As a whole, the reading program at Discovery Elementary would have to be considered exemplary.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement scores for the third and fifth grades bear out that fact the reading program is creating good readers, as the scores were above statewide and district-wide averages. The third grade also scored well in Math. The fifth grade did not do as well in Math, but still scored higher than the state average. The fifth grade scores in Writing may bear some scrutiny, as only one-third of the students scored in the highest two categories. A large percentage were in level two (63%), perhaps giving the staff at Discovery something to consider.

Iowa Basic Skills Tests also bear out the good reading skills of the Discovery students, as the second and fourth grades also were in the 67th and 68th percentile of the nation's students in Reading. Again, these students, for the most part, have been in the program for two years. The fourth grade group scored extremely well in all phases of the ITBS, with the possible exception of Language Usage (58%). The fact that Language Usage skills are the lowest, and the fifth grade lowest scoring on the MCA's was in writing, may be indicative of a need for the school to consider. However, there should be no panic, as in both cases large number of students are doing very well, and they are still above national norms. And, the Discovery staff can be proud of the high scores on the other batteries on the ITBS, especially in Math, Science and Information skills. Both the third and fourth grades show tremendous overall rankings in Math skills.

Both individual and group growth in reading and other batteries can be shown by the data collected. The program at Discovery Elementary appears to be working for most students. Clearly, as far as standardized tests are concerned, students are getting a very good basic education in this program.

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Eci' Nompa Woonspe'
Second Chance Learning Center
Standardized Test Analysis 2000

The Study

The leadership of the Eci' Nompa Woonspe' Second Chance Learning Center Charter School used the California Achievement Test to test basic skills of their students. No test was given in the fall of 98, when the school started. The first testing of students took place in the spring of 1999. In this last school year, 1999-2000, both fall and spring tests were given. The number of students who took all three tests is very small, only three students. There were three others who took tests in both the spring of 1999 and the spring of 2000; therefore, there are six students whose scores could be diagnosed for one-year gains. There were 20 students who took both the fall 1999 test and the spring 2000 test.

For the purposes of this report, grade equivalencies in the total batteries of Reading, Language Usage, and Mathematics were chosen as the primary reportable tool. The rationale is that raw score changes are difficult to compare and the test reports, except for a few, do not give percentiles scores. And, giving all the grade equivalencies for all the batteries would be unmanageable. However, the faculty of the school ought to utilize the full reports in order to diagnose individual student needs.

No Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Test scores were available for analysis as of October 2000.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation is the very small population of the school. Although some attempt is made to compare gains among classes of students, the small size of each group makes it difficult to make judgment on aggregate scores, percentiles or grade equivalents. For the purpose of this report, the analysis was limited to the raising or lowering of grade equivalencies on the part of individual students over time, and an analysis of the grade equivalency changes in small class groups over the course of one single school season. As it is possible for student scores to fluctuate widely due to a number of factors, one or two students' scores make a huge difference in whether or not average gains are legitimate. Some examples of this sort will be explained in the report.

Also, there are scores from only one type of test, with nothing else to compare. If a student did not do his or her best on this test, the results may not be show a true picture of the school program.

The Results

Six students took the CAT test two or three times, and at least once in two different school years. Therefore, these six can give somewhat of an idea of growth in the three areas of Reading, Language Usage and Mathematics from the spring of

1999 to the spring of 2000. Numbers are Grade Equivalency gains or losses over the year.

Student	Reading	Language	Math
1	-1.3	-2.1	+3.5
2	+1.0	+3.6	+1.0
3	-2.4	-3.6	+0.6
4	+2.0	+1.1	+4.9
5	+1.4	+3.4	+1.5
6	+3.5	+1.5	-0.2
Ave.	**+0.8**	**+0.5**	**+1.9**

Less than one-year growth, as an average, is shown in all but Math, where the gain is more than what may be expected. However, there are only two of the six students who did not gain in Reading and Language, and only one in Math. Positive gains were made by students 2, 4 and especially 5. Student 6 showed very positive gains in Reading and Language.

There were three students who had taken the CAT in the spring of 1999 and then again the next school year, but only in the fall of 1999. Their results are shown in the following chart:

Student	Reading	Language	Math
1	+1.0	-4.9	+1.5
2	0	-0.2	+1.6
3	+1.0	+1.1	-1.6
Ave.	**+0.7**	**-2.1**	**+0.5**

The Reading and Math positive gains appear to be about what one would expect for the turn around time involved. The loss of 4.9 grade equivalencies in Language on the part of one student over that period of time is inexplicable unless it was a "bad day" for test taking. However, that one person also gained 1.5 GE on the Math portion. Because of the small sample involved, not much should be made of these scores. They took place with a summer session in between, as well.

An analysis of the twenty students who took the CAT in the fall of 1999 and again in the spring of 2000 was also undertaken. Again, grade equivalencies are used to see whether or not gains were made. Rather than give all twenty in a chart, only the final tally is given. For the twenty students in aggregate, the Reading GE's saw an average gain of 1.14 over the school year. The Language GE's were raised an average of 1.07, and the Math GE's were raised a mere 0.4 GE's. Of the twenty students, 15 saw a raise in GE in the Reading portion, 12 gained in Language, and 11 gained in Math, with three staying even. Two of those who stayed even in Math had a 12.9 GE on both tests, so obviously could not raise their grade equivalency any further.

Also analyzed were students in the various grade levels who took the CAT in the fall of 1999 and the spring of 2000. The following are grade equivalencies of the classes:

Seventh N = 3

	Reading	Language	Math
Fall	3.5	3.2	5.3
Spring	4.6	3.7	6.6
+ or -	+0.9	+0.5	+1.3

Eighth N = 3

	Reading	Language	Math
Fall	4.0	2.0	3.6
Spring	5.2	2.7	5.2
+ or -	+1.2	+0.7	+1.6

Ninth N = 5

	Reading	Language	Math
Fall	5.0	3.0	8.0
Spring	7.1	6.7	8.6
+ or -	+2.1	+3.7	+0.6

Twelfth N = 2

	Reading	Language	Math
Fall	4.5	4.6	7.4
Spring	6.5	4.5	5.7
+ or -	+2.0	-0.1	-1.7

No Grade Designated N = 7

	Reading	Language	Math
Fall	2.9	2.0	3.1
Spring	3.1	2.3	3.6
+ or -	+0.2	+0.3	+0.5

The seventh through ninth grades appear to be making some nice gains in all three areas. The twelfth graders fell considerably in their Math test scores, but gained in Reading. The non-designated students, who are first year students, all appear to have a basic lack of skills. As they are at least the age of seventh graders, and some more than likely older, the grade equivalencies are very low. Many may be considered special education students, or Title I students, as their grade equivalencies are quite low overall. Nonetheless, they made some gains.

Analysis of the Results

Although there are students at the Second Chance Learning Center who did not make gains in Reading, Language and Math, there were more that did, as measured on the California Achievement Test. Positive grade equivalency gains of 2.0 to 3.5 were made by eight students in Reading; positive gains of 2.0 to 5.7 in grade equivalencies were made by five students in the area of Language Usage; and, positive gains of 2.0 to 4.9 were made by six students in Mathematics. The fact that those students who were in the program for the two years of operation appeared to not make much gain in any other than Math is due to a few people who appeared to have done much worse in one area of the test. There were not losses across the board. In fact, more students gained than lost. It certainly can be encouraging to see one student raise the grade equivalency in Math from a 4.6 grade level to a 10.5 grade level over the course of a year. And, similar gains are shown by students in other areas.

There does not appear to be any real patterns of significance. The group that took tests in the 98-99 school year and again in 99-00 appeared to have made most of their gains in math skills. Some students had very high scores in math.

Language usage appears to be an area that students lost ground on the most often, yet there was one student who raised their grade level 5.7 grade equivalencies in one year, and another who raised the GE 4.4 grade levels. Language usage remains the lowest in comparison to the rest of their peers across the nation. It is obviously an area that the school staff needs to address.

There were some very nice reading gains. More students made average grade level gains in reading than any other area. Overall, the test results do not point out any glaring weaknesses or strengths of the program.

It is obvious from the grade equivalencies for the age groups that there are many students who have come to this school with very few basic skills. When the reading, language and math skills are very low to begin with, major gains cannot be expected in short periods of time. So many students have to be dealt with individually, as there are wide gaps between students in the same age groups.

There are also a few students who have come with very good skills and have achieved high levels. There were some underclassmen that are on the level with the best seniors who have taken this test. It appears as though Eci' Nompa Woonspe' is in actuality giving students a second chance to succeed by providing them the opportunity to increase basic skills.

Fertile-Beltrami Elementary School
Standardized Test Analysis, 2000

The Study

The leadership at Fertile-Beltrami Elementary school chose to use the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for grades 2, 4 and 6. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment was used to analyze the third and fifth grade. Both tests were administered in the spring of 2000. As there was no pre-test and post-test results reported, this analysis is only of comparisons with national norms.

Also, the scores that were reported only included raw scores and national percentiles. Grade equivalencies were not given in this particular report; therefore analysis is extremely limited.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation is that there is no pre-test - post-test results to compare growth in the one year in the program. However, as it is a new program, perhaps it is not possible to see much gain in the first year after only 7 to 8 months. The size of the samples are adequate, but not large enough to overcome any great number of "outliers," or students who may have skewed the results by being either extremely low or extremely high. In all cases the percentage of students who are in Title I and who took the ITBS batteries are noted.

The Results

The Fertile-Beltrami sixth grade ITBS national percentiles for the Reading Total were at 68%, as opposed to the national percentile of 62%. In language Usage, the Fertile-Beltrami sixth graders were at 64%, while the national percentile was 54%. In Math (Problem Solving, Estimation, Concepts and Data Interpretation) they scored at 63%, while the national norm was at 59%. In Math Computation, the sixth grade was at 70% and the national norm was 63%. The number of students scored was 46, with 17% being indicated as eligible for Title I.

The fourth grade ITBS national percentile in Reading was 59% and the national norm was 61%. The fourth grade Language Usage Total percentile was 57%; the national norm was 63%. In Math, the fourth graders percentile was at 65% and the national norm was at 63%. In Math Computation, the Fertile-Beltrami students were at a percentile of 64%, and the national norm was at 65%. The number tested was 48 and 21% were designated Title I eligible.

The second grade had a national percentile of 73% in Reading, 71% in Language Usage, 78% in Math, and 74% in Math Computation. The national norms in each category were Reading 65%, Language 68%, Math 58% and Math Computation 66%. The second graders were higher than the national norms in all categories. Nineteen percent of the second graders were designated as eligible for Title I.

The third grade were administered the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in Reading and Mathematics. The third graders average scale score for all students tested in Reading was 1383, as opposed to the statewide average scale score of 1461. Thirty-three percent of the third grade students were scored in Level I, 39% in Level II, 25% in Level III and 3% in Level IV. In Mathematics, the third graders scored an average scaled score of 1407, while the state average was 1478. Fourteen percent were scored at Level I, 58% Level II, 22% Level III and 6% Level IV.

The fifth grade also took the MCA tests, in Reading, Math and Writing. In Reading, the fifth graders average scaled score was 1475 and the statewide average was 1493. In Mathematics, the F-B fifth graders scored 1422, while statewide the average was 1470. Seventeen percent scored at Level I, 36% in Level II, 45% in Level III and 2% Level IV. The fifth grade also must take a Writing assessment, which is scored in four categories; in the Descriptive Writing category, F-B fifth graders scored 1543, in Narrative 1415, in Problem Solution 1405 and in Clarification 1386. Statewide scores for those categories were descriptive, 1494; Narrative, 1421; Problem Solution, 1517; and Clarification, 1381.

Analysis of Results

The Fertile-Beltrami sixth grade students scored higher than the national norms on all four total batteries for which results were given. This shows that they are certainly capable students, and the staff has done the necessary curricular and instructional methods to prepare these students well. Whether or not the present program had anything to do with the sixth graders positive results is not possible to say. Only if a comparison of individual students' scores from their fourth grade ITBS and their sixth grade ITBS were done could one say. That may be able to be done by the teachers or leaders at the school, but cannot be done with what data was given for this report.

It appears that the fourth grade compared fairly well with those tested by the ITBS nationwide. They were a few percentage points lower, but within range of the national norms. Considering that 21% were eligible for Title I may indicate there were a few outliers that may have caused the percentages to be a bit lower. It is difficult to say what these scores say about the most recent program. Again, no comparison data is available.

As for the second grade, they show a great ability and rank very favorably with their peers across the nation. They scored higher in all four batteries reported by good margins, especially in Math (78% to 58%). The first and second grade teachers have done a good job of preparing these students for future endeavors. Whether or not the present program can maintain and build upon this foundation remains to be seen.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment results for the third graders show some disturbing results. That 33% of these students scored at Level I in Reading means that the school staff needs to work hard with these students. The average score of 1383 is eighty points lower than the state average. A good result for the program

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would be having these same students score much higher on their fifth grade Reading assessment, and would be a good gauge of the program's capabilities to increase reading skills, if indeed that is a goal of the program. And, the fact that the Mathematics average score of these third graders is lower than the state average means that some extra curricular time may be needed to increase basic skills of many of the students. The average score was seventy points lower than the state average.

The fifth grade MCA results are not as alarming, although they again are lower than state averages in Reading by approximately 20 points and approximately 50 points in Math. Still, having 44% in Level III-IV in Reading is not a bad statistic. Having only 29% in Level III-IV in Math is perhaps a reason to be concerned. There are some good results in the writing assessment, with the F-B fifth grade students scoring better in descriptive writing and nearly the same in narrative writing and clarification. The only area of concern was the area of problem solution writing. Overall, one could say that these fifth grade students write about on average with the state's fifth graders.

Overall, as pointed out in the section on limitations above, these scores reported are of little value for an assessment of this first year in the present program. There is not any comparable data at the present time. If and when these same students are assessed with the same or similar batteries of tests in the future, then a comparison may be done. If groups and individuals show marked improvements, then it could be said that the program is working to improve basic skills.

Fertile-Beltrami High School
Standardized Test Analysis 2000

The Study

Fertile- Beltrami High School has instituted a program, called Links to Learning, as an effort to revitalize the rural school district and community. Links to Learning attempts to builds connections between students, local residents and businesses through the use of technology. One project involves students in an effort to create and maintain web sites for local businesses. Other efforts include mini-sessions led by community volunteers, student entrepreneurial projects, students teaching community members how to use technology and a laptop check out program for the public.

The standardized test chosen by the leaders of the project was the PLAN student report of the national ACT test, given to tenth graders only. This test gives students an idea of how they rank with other non-college bound or college bound students and gives indications of what fields for which their skills are best suited. The batteries of the test chosen for this report are the English Usage, Reading and Mathematics portions, and the basic skills necessary for ongoing learning. The test

was administered in September of 1999 and again to the same group of students in May of 2000.

Limitations

The primary limitation is that the test has very little to do with the project program, therefore reveals very little as to whether or not the program is successful. Criterion and performance based tests would be a much better indicator of technology development, and surveys of students and community members would indicate if the technology component and community building aspects were, indeed, working. The standardized tests given should primarily be used to indicate whether or not the students are maintaining basic skills as they build upon new skills. And, the purpose of the test administered is to determine student vocational skills and college-bound readiness more so than to indicate skill maintenance or growth.

Also, the fact that the tests were only administered to the tenth graders and no other grades is a weakness in regard to determining effect of the program. It is understood that the program included students in other grades, but they were not tested.

The number of students who took the pre-test and post-test was large enough to give a good statistical indication of growth, or lack thereof. The number of students is not a limitation.

The Results

There were 44 students who took both the pre-test and post-test in Reading and Math, while 43 took both of the English Usage portions. Because raw scores were available on all three, a paired sample t-test was administered to determine if there was a statistical difference in pre and post scores.

In the English Usage portion, 21 students increased their scores, and 21 scores declined, with one staying even. The pre-test mean was 17.07 and the post-test mean was 17.37. This 0.3 difference was not a significant difference, as it rendered a t-statistic of 0.82. There were eight students who scored at the 90th percentile or higher. The score of 17 indicates a national percentile of 58, and a score of 18 indicates a national percentile of 67. Therefore, it could be said that the group, in May, would be approximately at the 61st percentile on the PLAN test.

In the Mathematics portion of the test, 22 students increased their scores, 13 had their scores decline, and 9 had the same score. The pre-test mean was 15.59 and the post-test mean was 16.16. The difference in means was 0.57. Though this is a larger difference than in English Usage, it is still not a statistically significant difference, as the t-statistic was 1.52. There were three students who scored at the 90th percentile or higher in math. A score of 15 would be at the national percentile of 42, while a score

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of 16 would be at the 55th percentile nationally. This group could be said to be at the 56th percentile in May of 2000.

In the Reading portion, 16 students' scores increased, and 26 students' scores declined, with 2 remaining the same. The pre-test mean was 16.86 and the post-test mean was 15.93. Obviously, this represents a loss, although not a statistically significant one (with a t-statistic of 1.39).

On closer inspection, the reading scores saw some significant losses, one dropping from 21 to 11 in raw score (from 85th percentile to 18th percentile) and another from 20 to 11 (79th to 18th). Another two dropped from 18 to 13, two others from 19 to 14, and another student from 18 to 10. There seems to be no explanation for why the reading scores saw some dramatic drops and had more students show losses than gains.

The national percentile for the mean of 17 is 64, while the national percentile for the mean of 16 is 58. This group fell approximately from the 62nd percentile to the 57th percentile. There were, however, more students at the 90th percentile or higher in reading in May than there were in September - four as opposed to two.

Analysis of the Results

As was mentioned previously, the test that was given to the tenth grade students is not a true indication of what was gained or lost by the project program. Other measures will have to be used to make those judgments. However, the faculty and administration, to determine if some curricular means will be necessary to maintain growth of basic skills, should use the PLAN test results.

From the results it can be seen that mathematics skills improved to an almost significant level. The English scores indicate that most students improved, but to a very little degree. The reading scores indicate that most student's scores had actually gone down in the intervening eight months between tests. Although there were some losses, the overall percentiles for each battery remained higher than the national average.

On the face of it, it would appear that a raise in percentile from 49 to 56 in math is significant and perhaps should be touted as such, even though the raw score paired sample t-test fell short of being designated a significant difference. And, the raise of the group percentile from 58th to 61st in English is positive to note. The loss of reading, on the part of 26 students and a loss from the 62nd to the 57th percentile is alarming, however.

There may very well be explanations for the test results. Many other pre-test/post-test scores, when tests are given twice in one school year, indicate irrational results. But because the other two batteries did not indicate such major fluctuations as did the reading portion, it behooves the faculty to take a good look at the students whose reading scores went down, at the reading curriculum expectations, and perhaps at the test itself.

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Fertile-Beltrami High School

The Fertile-Beltrami Links to Learning Program attempts to link the community and the school through hands-on technology training. Students are involved with helping elementary students, local businesses and community members learn to use technology, while maintaining basic skills.

The Fertile-Beltrami tenth grade was administered the ACT PLAN test to indicate both future planning and growth of basic skills. Slight growth was shown in English usage (58th percentile to 61st percentile) and in mathematics (49th percentile to 56th percentile), but overall losses were indicated in reading skills. The group that was tested still ranked in the 57th percentile nationally in reading.

Hanska Community Elementary School
Analysis of Standardized Test Scores, 2000

The Study

The Hanska Community School staff utilized the Iowa Test of Basic Skills test for the second, fourth and sixth graders, and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for third and fifth graders to assess basic skill development. Due to problems instituting the school's program (Hanska Community School is a new charter school), and with the ITBS scoring and norming system, the ITBS pre-test and post-test scores are not reported at this time. The primary reason is that the ITBS batteries taken in the fall of 1999 were normed differently than the spring ITBS batteries taken by the same students in the spring. The school staff is waiting until the testing service employed has re-normed the tests, and may wait until next year to get scores that can be compared.

However, there are scores for the MCA for third and fifth graders. There are no pre-test and post-test scores for this assessment.

Limitations

As noted above, the primary limitation is that there is very little information to go on at this time. With the ITBS results still pending, this report is incomplete. Another major limitation to any standardized test analysis of the Hanska school students is the very small size of each group. Hanska had only 4 third graders and 7 fifth graders to report scores on. Therefore, one or two "outliers" skew the average results to a great extent.

The Results

The only test results that can be reported at this time is the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment average scores for the third grade (four of them), and the fifth grade (seven of them). The average scores can be compared to state scores in the batteries of Math, Reading and Writing (for fifth only).

The third graders at Hanska had 25% (one) perform in Math at Level I, and 75% (three) at Level II. There were none at Level III or IV. The average score for Hanska was 1335 and the state average was 1478. The Reading analysis showed 75% of the students (three) were at Level II, and 25% (one) was at Level III. The Hanska average score was 1455, while the state average was 1461.

The fifth grade had 29% at Level I in Math, 43% in Level II, 14% in Level III, and 14% in Level IV. Their average score was 1453 as compared to the state average of 1470. In reading, Hanska fifth graders had none in Level I, 71% in Level II, 29% in Level III and none in Level IV. The Hanska average score was 1416 and the state average was 1493. In writing, the only statistic that was given was the percentage in Level I (29%) and in Level II (71%). The Minnesota state web site did not have any further information on Hanska students.

Analysis of the Results

There is very little to analyze due to the ITBS scores being in limbo. And, because the sample size is so small, one would have to hesitate making any judgements about the Hanska program and the ability of the program to affect basic skills. The data may be used by the staff to make preparation for the 2000-2001 year. Obviously, there are some students who will need to increase their skill levels in math. The reading results appear to be more favorable. The fifth grade writing scores are low, and there should be some improvement looked for in that area by the staff.

If the ITBS scores become available for this past school year, they can be compared with the 2000-20001 year scores. Then it may be possible to see increases in students' basic skills.

International Falls Elementary
1999-2000 Standardized Test Scores Analysis

The Study

The teachers and administration of the International Falls Elementary chose to report the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for grades 3-6. Batteries in Reading, Language, Mathematics, Social, Science, and Information Processing where utilized to determine student learning. This differs slightly from the 1998-1999 year in that the school is not reporting two tests in the same year, but measuring the students after one year, from spring to spring.

Limitations

There are few limitations on this study beyond the small number of students in each class. The class sizes ranged from 22-26, so it is possible that two-three outliers may prove to increase or decrease aggregate scores out of proportion. The scores of individual students were not given for analysis. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if the aggregate scores are due to a few individuals. And, it is not

possible to see if individuals were able to increase or decrease their scores dramatically.

Also, the scores reported this year were only aggregate for each class, so that a detailed analysis of individuals could not take place. However, the fact that there are four classes of students, and the test was given to each of those classes, it is possible to get a good indication of a full year's growth for the fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes.

Report of the Data

The following table shows the results of the ITBS in Grade Equivalency (GE) and National Percentile Rank (PR):

Grade 3

	Reading	Lang.	Math	Social	Science	Inform.	Composite
GE	5.0	4.5	5.2	4.5	4.9	4.5	4.6
PR	73	68	80	67	74	70	72

Grade 4

GE	5.4	5.7	5.9	5.0	5.4	5.8	5.4
PR	61	66	68	54	62	69	64

Grade 5

	Reading	Lang.	Math	Social	Science	Inform.	Composite
GE	7.0	6.3	6.6	5.8	7.0	6.9	6.5
PR	69	54	62	50	6.5	65	61

Grade 6

GE	7.6	8.7	8.5	8.2	9.0	8.3	8.4
PR	62	68	71	64	71	64	68

From the report of a year ago it is possible to look at aggregate changes in composite grade equivalencies for the fourth, fifth and sixth graders.

The composite on the ITBS batteries for the 2000 fourth graders as third graders in 1999 was a 4.2 grade equivalency. As fourth graders, that composite grade equivalency is 5.4, showing a gain of +1.2 grades as measured on a nationally normed test.

The composite on the ITBS batteries for the 2000 fifth graders as fourth graders was a 5.2 GE. As fifth graders, the composite GE was 6.5, showing a gain of +1.3. The 2000 sixth graders as fifth graders a year ago had a composite GE of 6.4 and a GE of 8.4 as sixth graders, representing a +2.0 rise in one year!

Analysis of the Results

By any indication, the ITBS scores of the four classes at International Falls Elementary are phenomenal. Rare is it to see a school exhibit grade equivalencies and percentile ranks far above the norm across the board. Clearly there are many excellent students in these classes. And, the rise in composite scores on the ITBS from year to year indicates that the students are gaining at a faster rate than peers are across the nation. The fact that the sixth grade increased the composite grade equivalency from 6.4 to 8.4 in one year indicates that the longer students are in the program, the better they become. Last year's sixth grade also posted phenomenal scores.

What cannot be determined is what is the cause of these scores. Is it nature, or nurture? No individual scores were reported, hence it is difficult to see individual growth. However, composite grade equivalencies were raised by more than one year in all three cases where they could be compared. And, when there are so many high percentile ranks for individual classes, it generally means that there are quite a large number who rank in the 90-99th percentiles. These students would have a hard time increasing those percentiles due to the ceiling effect. Therefore, if indeed most of the students tested are the same persons, one would have to say that the International Falls Elementary teachers are doing an excellent job with their students in all areas tested on the Iowa Basic Skills Tests. Certainly their methodology ought to be considered as playing a large part in the outcomes of the students.

Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary
Standardized Test Analysis, 2000

The Study

The study done by the leadership at JWP Elementary used the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to test students in first, second and fourth grades, and the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests for grades 3 and 5. Because they have three years of ITBS scores and have reported results, this study can determine group growth for the same groups of students as they moved through the three years. Therefore, there are a number of direct comparisons for groups, when using the percentiles and grade equivalencies for selected groups. The 98-99 second graders took the ITBS as first graders in 97-98, so growth can

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be shown over that one year. Also, the fourth grade of 99-00 can be measured against their ITBS scores for second grade in 97-98 (no first grade scores were taken three years ago). Although the batteries change, if the Reading Total, Language Total, Math Total, Core Total and Composite Totals are used, change in national percentiles and grade equivalencies can be analyzed.

There is one group that did not have more than one ITBS score that can be measured against another (the first grade in 2000). And, the third and fifth grade scores on the MCA are reported, but with no comparison scores. In these cases, those groups will be compared to national and state norms.

Limitations

This study does not include a specific program change prior to the 99-00 year; therefore the growth between the 97-98 and 98-99 years cannot be determined to have been due to the changes in program. It is still difficult to prove that program changes had any major affect on student individual or aggregate growth. The scores for each group of students are also split between those students on IEP's or in the Title One program and the rest of the students. Also, the special education groups are very small, and there may have been changes in personnel from year to year. Therefore, the changes that appear in grade equivalencies and percentiles may be influenced greatly by one or two individuals and it may be that the same individuals are not represented.

Otherwise, the fact that the staff at JWP has reported a large amount of data allows for a much more in depth report, with comparisons possible as long as the limitations mentioned above are taken into consideration.

Test Results

The groups of students that were in first grade in 1998-1999 were tested with the ITBS in April of 1999, and again as second graders in April of 2000. Following are the results of the national percentiles and grade equivalencies in battery totals:

	Reading Total	Language Total	Math Total	Core Total	Composite
Grade 1, 99	54%; 1.9GE	57%; 1.9GE	62%; 2.0GE	57%; 1.9GE	58%; 2.0GE
Grade 2, 00	54%; 2.9GE	49%; 2.8GE	53%; 2.8GE	51%; 2.8GE	50%; 2.8GE

In the first grade year, there were 28 students tested, and in the second grade year 25 were tested. As can be seen, the group gained in grade equivalency by 1.0 in reading, .8 in language, .8 in math, .9 in core total, and .8 in the composite. Expected growth would be 1.0 or better. (Actually, the nationally normed group raised grade equivalencies by 1.1 to 1.3 on all the batteries mentioned).

The data on the small group of students identified as in special education, the following changes were noted:

	Reading Total	Language Total	Math Total	Core Total	Composite
Grade 1, 99	4%; K8GE	4%; K7GE	1%; K6GE	2%; K8GE	3%; K8GE
Grade 2, 00	18%; 1.9GE	11%; 1.7GE	13%; 1.9GE	11%; 1.8GE	11%; 1.9GE

The group was made up of three students in 1999 and five in 2000. The fact that there was significant growth in percentiles and grade equivalencies may be due to the addition of the two students, or to the program.

Another grade grouping that could be compared are the second graders from 1998 who were the fourth graders in 2000. Again, this grade level group was broken into two categories. Comparisons will be made on the same batteries:

	Reading Total	Language Total	Math Total	Core Total	Composite
Grade 2, 98	66%; 3.2GE	61%; 3.1GE	60%; 3.1GE	64%; 3.1GE	58%; 3.0GE
Grade 4, 00	60%; 5.3GE	51%; 5.3GE	53%; 4.9GE	54%; 4.9GE	54%; 4.9GE

As can be seen, the percentiles dropped in all cases, and grade equivalencies were raised from 2.2 to 1.8 in the battery totals. As a raise of 2.0 would have been expected, the group seemed to stay even with peers across the country only in Reading and Language. It should be noted that the average user in these batteries raised their grade equivalencies greater than the expected average. However, percentiles of the average user of the ITBS at the fourth grade level did not stay as high as they had been, making this particular group of students pretty well near the average group across the country.

The group of special education identified students for these grade levels had the following changes:

	Reading Total	Language Total	Math Total	Core Total	Composite
Grade 2, 98	11%; 1.7GE	6%; 1.4GE	1%; 1.1GE	4%; 1.4GE	2%; 1.4GE
Grade 4, 00	24%; 3.6GE	18%; 2.0GE	21%; 3.7GE	16%; 3.4GE	18%; 3.4GE

Again, the same type of results as noted in the other comparison group. And, again the group grew in size from three to five. Therefore, the raises in percentiles and grade equivalencies could be a symptom of the additional members to the group, or each individual tested 1998 could have shown major improvements by 2000.

The only other group for which there were ITBS scores was the first grade of 2000. For those who were not on IEP's (N=39), the Reading Total percentile was 52% and GE of 1.9; Language Total percentile of 54% and GE of 1.9; Math Total percentile of 53% and GE of 1.8; Core Total percentile of 51% and GE of 1.8; and, a Composite percentile of 55% and GE of 1.9. For those on IEP's, (N=5), the Reading Total percentile was 49% and GE of 1.7; Language Total percentile of 14%

and GE of 1.0; Math Total percentile of 11% and GE of 1.2; Core Total percentile of 11% and 1.1 GE; and Composite percentile of 15% and 1.2 GE.

The third and fifth grades were tested by the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests. The MCA's test for reading and mathematics for third graders; and reading, mathematics and writing for fifth graders.

The third grade had 24% score at Level I, 32% in Level II, 44% in Level III and none at Level IV in Reading. In Math, there were 15% in Level I, 47% in Level II, 35% in Level III, and 3% in Level IV. The Reading average score for JWP was 1433 as opposed to the statewide average of 1461. The JWP Math average score was 1417 as opposed to the statewide average of 1478. In general, the group is slightly below average in both areas.

The fifth grade at JWP Elementary had 6% in Level I, 53% in Level II, 31% in Level III and 10% in Level IV in the Reading battery. In the Math portion, there were 9% in Level I, 63% in Level II, 22% in Level III and 6% in Level IV. The Reading average score for JWP fifth graders was 1478 and the statewide average was 1493. The JWP average Math score was 1447 with the state fifth grade average at 1470. Again, the group scored slightly below average.

In writing, the JWP fifth grade scored an average of 1440 in descriptive writing, with the state average at 1494; 1209 in narrative writing, with the state average at 1421; 1323 in problem solution, with the state average 1517; and, 1261 in clarification, with the state average at 1381. In all cases, the fifth grade at JWP elementary scored well below the state averages in writing skills.

Analysis of the Results

In the comparison cases it would appear that students at JWP have not kept pace with peers across the country that also took the ITBS batteries. The group which were first graders in 1999 and second graders in 2000 gained less than 1.0 grade equivalencies in all batteries but reading. This is also so of the fourth graders of 2000 who were second graders in 1998. Why this is the case is not clear. The staff ought to analyze individual scores on these batteries and see if the declining percentiles and the resultant grade equivalencies were due to a few students who did poorly on the tests, or if there were many who did not keep pace. In either case, the program ought to be examined to make a determination of the cause.

The students in each case did not fall behind a great deal, and for the most part they are, as a group, about average in basic skills. But, it is much more important to look at individual scores to determine what each child needs and tailor the curriculum or program around those needs.

The third and fifth grade reading and writing skills are also somewhat behind the level of most of the students in the state. Again, this need not be a major concern because the scores are nearly average, unless there is a similar pattern of decline in relation to the growth of peers across the state and nation. Certainly, the staff needs to work on writing skills for the group of students that was in fifth grade during the 1999-2000 calendar year.

Overall, as was mentioned previously, it is difficult to know what is a result of the current program and what is due to the previous program at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary School. The current program has not been in operation long enough to notice major results. Perhaps after another year or two some of the current patterns will be reversed.

Miltona Elementary
Standardized Test Analysis, 2000

The Study

The fourth and sixth graders in the Alexandria School District, within which the Miltona Elementary School is located, are administered the Six Trait Analytic Writing Assessment. These are scored on a 1-4 scale, and the traits are taught to the elementary students early in their writing exercises. Then scores are taken at the end of their fourth and sixth grade years for district wide comparisons. Each school in the district continues to teach and build on the six traits.

Also reported was a District Level Achievement score for grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 in Math skills and Reading skills. As the Alexandria district uses it's own testing system, no comparisons to national norms are included. However, Miltona Elementary can be compared with other elementary school's scores throughout the district.

Limitations

The greatest limitation for this report on Miltona Elementary is that the school is very small. For example, the sixth grade showed twenty students taking the tests, the fourth grade twenty-six. Due to the number of students, a few students on IEP's or in Title I may skew the averages very quickly. And, on the other hand, a few extremely advanced students may skew the results higher than normal very easily.

Also limiting is the nature of the Six Trait Writing Assessments. Because a scale of 1-4 is used, and incremental change is minute, it is difficult to show statistically significant change from one group to another or one year to another.

Another limitation to this study is that the assessments administered do not give national norms to compare either Miltona Elementary or Alexandria District

students with peers across the country. The comparisons between Miltona and their sister schools do not tell us how much either of them may be preparing students for basic skills in regard to national norms.

The Results

For the Six Trait Analytic Writing Assessments, the six traits are identified and the fourth and sixth grade students from Miltona will be compared with Alexandria district results. There are no national normed results reported. The results were broken down between females and males, but for the purposes of this report, the two were averaged. Results are in the chart below:

Trait	Ideas/Content	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence	Convention
Miltona 4	2.55	2.30	2.25	2.25	2.35	2.25
District 4	2.50	2.35	2.35	2.45	2.40	2.65
Miltona 6	2.95	2.90	2.75	2.80	2.85	3.15
District 6	2.75	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.80	3.15

Another assessment that is used by the Miltona School to compare with the district is the District Level Achievement Tests. The numbers given are raw scores averaged by grade? The results are as follows:

Battery	Mathematics	Reading
Miltona 3	200	197
District 3	208	204
Miltona 4	213	208
District 4	214	210
Miltona 5	224	215
District 5	214	217
Miltona 6	228	227
District 6	220	222

Analysis of the Results

The Miltona fourth graders averaged slightly under the district in almost all of the writing traits as can be seen by the figures in the chart above. However, they are so close as to be practically identical, except in the trait of conventional usage, where they are significantly behind. On the other hand, the sixth graders at Miltona are slightly better than their counterparts in the district. Overall, it is difficult to say which is more affective; the district program, or the Miltona program in regard to developing writing traits. And, due to the fact that no national norms are given, it cannot be said the Miltona or district students are better or worse than their counterparts elsewhere.

However, it is possible to compare the district fifth grade students with statewide students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in writing to see if the writing program used by the district does prepare students well. (No breakdown by school was provided to see how Miltona Elementary compared). In the area of descriptive writing, the Alexandria district outperformed the average student in the state by an average score of 1588 to 1494, in narrative writing 1571 to 1421, in problem solutions 1570 to 1517. But, in the area of clarification, the Alexandria students were slightly lower than the state average, 1379 to 1381. None-the-less, the district does a good job of preparing students to write well. It can only be presumed, due to the fact that Miltona students are about the same or a little better than district-wide students, that the Miltona program is doing a very good job in the area of writing skills.

The Miltona third grade students are slightly behind the average district student in math skills, and slightly behind in reading skills. But, again, in comparing the district MCA averages to the Alexandria district scores, one can see that this difference does not mean that Miltona students are behind state standards. The Alexandria third graders scored an average score of 1583 while the state average was 1478. Consequently, even if the district achievement tests show Miltona students slightly behind their counterparts in the district, one could say they, as a group, are still well above average. This could be said for reading skills as well, as the Alexandria district average was 1510 and the state average was 1461.

The Miltona fourth graders also showed slightly lower scores in the district-wide tests, but by a very small percentage. There are no statewide tests to compare this to. The fifth graders at Miltona outperformed the district fifth graders by ten points in math skills, but were a few points lower in reading. A statewide comparison is possible by utilizing Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment average scores. The Alexandria fifth graders outperformed the state students in math 1509 to 1470, and in reading 1539 to 1493. Again, it may be said that Miltona students are above state averages, as a group, in reading and math skills.

The Miltona sixth graders performed almost on par with district wide sixth graders. There is no way to compare to state or national norms.

In any case, it would appear as if the Miltona program is keeping students on par or above average in basic skills while it may be supplying them with other skills not noted in standardized tests.

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Perham High School
"Together For the Future" Class
ACT Test Results and Analysis

The Study

The Perham High School "Together for the Future" teachers chose to use the American College Test, the ACT, as the standardized test. They did so because they thought it most relevant to the young people who would be interested in the "Together for the Future" class. The tests that were administered were practice tests, except in the case of the junior class spring edition.

The students in the program took three batteries from the ACT; the Reading portion, the English Usage portion; and, the Science portion. The goals and objectives of the program were to give students the opportunity to retain more of what they learned by process oriented techniques. The program hoped to show gains in student learning in the areas of Science, English, and Computer Technology. There is no Computer Technology portion in the ACT test.

Raw scores were reported for both the pre-test administered in January of 1999, and for the post-test administered in the May 2000. From the raw scores a scaled score was determined in order to see if progress was made in each of the areas. Not all students had pre-test and post-test scores, but a large majority did. Students ranged from Ninth Graders to Eleventh Graders. Hence, many of the students, in fact a majority, took an ACT test equivalent to what a typical junior in high school would be expected to take. Composite scores reflect the fact that a number of the students in this program did not score highly, but they should not expect to have very high scores when they are compared nationally to all juniors who take the ACT test. For the purposes of this report and for evaluating the effect of the program, only the difference between pre-test and post-test scores should be considered.

An addition for the year 2000 is a more longitudinal study of ACT scores in the three areas for those students who took tests both in the 98-99 school year and the 99-00 school year. The scaled scores compared were the highest recorded score in 98-99 and the highest reported score in 99-00. This would give the reader the opportunity to see if gains were made over a two-year period rather than over a few months of a given school year.

Limitations

As noted above, the scores on the ACT portions chosen are not to be compared with national norms, but only used in comparison to each other. There is no attempt to use the ACT scores from these tests for college admission (with the possible exception of the juniors). One of the major limitations, therefore, is the small sample of students.

It appears as if the pre-test was administered late in the year, as they were dated January 27, 2000. Therefore, the students had only from January to May to show

progress. This is very little time to reflect changes in ability or skill. This is a severe limitation to the validity of the scores reported.

Another limitation is that the raw scores are converted to scaled scores, which scale from 1-36. Hence, changes are by nature in small increments (i.e., from 10 to 11, for example). Consequently, statistical analysis of paired samples will show only small differentials at best.

Results

Results of the ACT raw scores in Reading, English Usage, and Science were turned into scaled scores. The scores of the students who took both pre-tests and post-tests were then statistically analyzed in a paired sample t-test.

The results of the paired sample test of Reading scores showed a pre-test Mean of 11.471 and SD of 1.988, and a post-test Mean of 13.588 and SD of 3.006, with N=34. This represents a significant positive gain with the difference between means at 2.118 and a t-statistic of 3.80 (a t-value of 2.10 represents a significant difference). Twenty-four students showed a positive gain, nine showed a loss, with one staying even.

The results of the paired sample test on English scores showed a pre-test Mean of 12.382 and a SD of 2.640, and a post-test Mean of 13.412 and a SD of 3.056, with N=34. Although this represents an aggregate gain, it is not a statistically significant gain in that the t-statistic is 1.43, lower than the 2.10 necessary to report with confidence that the scores are not due to chance. Eighteen students showed a positive gain, twelve showed a loss, with four staying even.

The results of the paired sample test on Science scores showed a pre-test Mean of 16.212 and a SD of 2.997. and a post-test Mean of 14.788 and SD of 3.286, with N=33. This represents a significant difference with a t-statistic of 1.424, but represents a loss of knowledge and skills on part of the students. Twenty students showed a loss of scaled scores in Science, with only ten showing a gain. Two stayed at the same score.

When analyzing scores from both the 98-99 school year and the 99-00 school year, 18 students were found to have pre-test and post-test data for both years. These were analyzed to see if gains were made over the two years.

In the Reading scores, the paired sample t-test showed a pre-test Mean of 12.778 and SD of 2.390, and a post-test Mean of 13.944 and SD of 2.879, with N=18. The difference in means was 1.167. Although representing a positive change, this does not represent a significant difference, as the t-statistic was 1.45. Nine students showed positive gains, five exhibited losses, and four stayed at the same score.

In the English scores, the paired sample t-test showed a pre-test Mean of 13.412 and SD of 1.938, and a post-test Mean of 14.529 and SD of 2.625, with N=17. The

difference between means was 1.118. Again, the t-statistic of 1.58 was lower than the 2.10 needed to show a significant difference. However, eleven students exhibited a positive gain, while three showed a loss and three stayed even.

The Science paired t-test showed a pre-test Mean of 14.444 and SD of 1.917, and a post-test Mean of 17.222 and SD of 2.602, with N=18. The difference between means was 2.778. This does represent a significant difference in that the t-statistic was 2.778. Sixteen students showed positive gains in Science scores on the ACT, while only two exhibited losses.

Analysis of Results

The rationale for including the Reading, English and Science batteries of the ACT test were to see if students indeed were gaining in communication skills and science reasoning as a result of the program. There are limitations, as noted above, and they need to be considered when analyzing the results. It is extremely difficult to show major gains in a test of the nature of the ACT in a short period of time, especially when the pre-test is given in January and the post-test in May. The results of the three batteries for the tests given in 2000 reflect this.

The only paired sample test to show a significant difference was the Reading test. The results for last year also exhibited a gain in Reading scores. However, when looking at the sample of paired tests for the two-year comparison, there was no significant difference. The number of students who had scores for both years was low, however (18). Therefore the particular students who had such scores may not represent the whole program, especially only over a two year period. Because a large number of students did raise their scores, and the mean was raised in both samples (within 2000 and comparing 1999 and 2000), it could be said that the program is raising reading abilities of the students in general. Whether this is due to the program or not is difficult to say, as these scores are not compared to a control group in another program.

In the English usage category, neither the one-year sample nor the two-year sample exhibited a significant difference as measured by the paired sample t-test. However, again, the majority of students did raise their raw and scaled scores. The t-test value of 1.43 was not far from the 2.10 needed to show a significant difference. Gains are being made, although modest. The fact that a number of students have not shown gains, but losses, is a concern. Perhaps the losses can be attributed to test anxiety, differences between what is taught and what is tested, or the time of year the tests are taken. (It is significant that the Standard Deviations are all higher in the spring tests, meaning that the variation between student scores is greater; this could be attributed to students' lack of concern or interest in the spring tests, especially when they are taken so close together in time).

The Science test results create quite a quandary. The tests taken in 2000 showed a definite loss on the part of most students, going from a mean of 16.2 to 14.8, and with twenty of thirty-three students exhibiting losses. It may be that Science skills were not stressed in the months between the pre-test and the post-test. If so, then what may have led to the positive change of the 18 samples from 98-99 to 99-00?

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The samples who had scores from both years had a Mean of 17.2, which is higher than the Mean of the 16.2 the January 2000 battery exhibited, and certainly higher than the Mean of the May 2000 test (14.8). It may be that the eighteen students who had scores from both years were the exception, and the others have not been in the program long enough to show gains. Whichever the case, the teachers need to examine their methodologies to see where the breakdown may have occurred. It may simply be the choice to test in January and then again in May.
Overall, the Perham program appears to be helping some students make gains in ACT scores in the batteries chosen. However, it may be that other sorts of assessments (performances, demonstrations, survey data) will indicate that students are making the kind of gains the supporters hope to see. The standardized test score data is not enough to make any judgements for or against the methods chosen.

Southwest Star Concept School
Analysis of Standardized Test Scores, 2000

The Study

The program at Southwest Star Concept School have utilized the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the second, fourth, sixth grades; and have utilized the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests for third, fifth, eighth and tenth grades. As this is the second year of reporting, there are no test scores using the same test batteries two years in a row, so there are no direct comparisons between individual students or individual grades as clusters. However, there may be some indication of growth by looking at the ITBS and the MCA test results to see if students, in aggregate clusters of grades, are indeed showing growth in basic skills.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation is that there are no direct comparisons on the same test batteries at this time. The only data reported is aggregate data, which may be skewed by outliers in each of the grades. The number of students in each of the grades taking the ITBS is 18, 31, and 27. The presumption is that the numbers taking the third and fifth grade MCA's is similar. Small numbers of individuals taking standardized tests, and having aggregate scores reported, always must be taken with the consideration that one or two students, either on the lower or higher end, can skew the results.

The comparisons of growth in each case, such as in Reading or Math, can only be done in some general way. No direct comparison between each year is possible at this time.

Test Results

The second grade at Southwest Star took the ITBS for the first time in April of 2000. Reported are the Reading, Language, Mathematics Totals, and the Total

Battery Composite in both aggregate National Percentile and Grade Equivalency. The second grade group scored at the percentile of 60% and had a GE of 3.1 in Reading; scored at 54% and GE of 2.9 in Language; 80% and GE of 3.7 in Math; and, a composite of 65% and 3.1 GE. There are no other tests taken by this group to compare data.

The third grade group at Southwest Star took the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Test in Reading and Mathematics. In Reading, the group as an aggregate had 29% in Level I, 57% in Level II, 14% in Level III and none in Level IV. The Reading score for the third grade was 1367, while the statewide average score was 1461. In Math, the third graders had 10% in Level I, 65% in Level II, 24% in Level III and none in Level IV. The average score for the third grade was 1392 and the statewide average was 1478.

The fourth grade at Southwest Star took the ITBS batteries in Reading, Language and Mathematics. As with the second graders, the fourth grade aggregate totals in percentiles and grade equivalencies, along with the composite, are reported. In Reading, the percentile was 50% and GE of 4.8; in Language, 55% and GE of 5.2; in Math 70% and GE of 5.8; and composite, 56% and GE of 5.2. When this group was in the third grade in 1999, their Minnesota Achievement score in Reading was 1397 as opposed to the statewide average of 1428; and, their Math score was 1510 as opposed to the statewide average of 1460.

The fifth grade took the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Test in 2000. The grade as a group in Reading had 7% in Level I, 40% in Level II, 43% in Level III and 10% in Level IV. Their overall average score was 1486 and the statewide average was 1493. In Math, the fifth graders had 10% in Level I, 43% in Level II, 37% in Level III and 10% in Level IV. The composite average for the fifth graders was 1482 and the statewide average for fifth graders was 1470. In Writing, there were 17% in Level I, 37% in Level II, 46% in Level III and none in Level IV. The average score was 1520 as opposed to the statewide average of 1493. The fifth graders as fourth graders in 1999 had an aggregate percentile of 56% and GE of 5.4 in Reading; a percentile of 52% and GE of 5.3 in Language; a percentile of 63% and GE of 6.2 in Math; and, a composite percentile of 57% and 5.6 GE.

The sixth grade at Southwest Star recorded a percentile of 61% and GE of 7.6 in Reading on the ITBS in 2000; a percentile of 61% and GE of 7.8 in Language; a percentile of 67% and 8.2 GE in Math; and, a composite percentile of 64% and GE of 7.9 in the ITBS. This same group as fifth graders in 1999 had an average score of 1440 in the MCA Reading test, while the state average was 1457. They had an average of 1445 in Math as opposed to the statewide average of 1417, and a writing average score of 1501 as opposed to the statewide average of 1475.

Analysis of the Results

In all cases, from the second grade through the sixth grade, the average composite of any battery, whether on the ITBS or the MCA, the Southwest Star students have

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been nearly average to well above average. Where they had scored less than average, on some of the Reading tests, they appear to be slightly below average only as compared to their peers in Minnesota. And, it also appears they have either maintained their relative advantage or possibly gained in some areas.

The second grade has no previous tests to make any comparison. In looking at the group as a whole, it appears the teachers and curriculum at Southwest Star have done well in creating an atmosphere that allows for development of basic skills. The fact that the group is well above average in all but Language usage is indicative of good methodology in the first two years.

The fact that there is only one group that appeared to have started below average (the year 2000 fourth grade in reading), and that in the latest ITBS they are on average with the nation shows that the staff at Southwest Star are able to help students make progress. It should be said that there is no direct comparison until next years' MCA tests, but the fact that the group is at the 55th percentile in Language and 50th percentile in Reading after being scored less than average on the MCA in 1999, indicates that there may be some progress made in the area of reading and writing skills.

There is one group that appears to possibly have slipped in reading skills. The 1999-2000 fifth grade has a slightly lower than state average in reading skills (1486 average vs. 1493), while they were at the 56th percentile on the ITBS as fourth graders a year earlier. It may well be that being an average Minnesota student is equal to being at the 56th percentile nationally, however, so the two scores are probably not indicative of a loss of reading skills.

All groups at Southwest Star appear to do extremely well in Mathematics. There is only one grade that was less than average in Math scores, and that was the year 2000 third grade group (an average score of 1392 vs. the state average of 1478 on the MCA). As this group was not tested as second graders, there is no way to measure progress. In two years they will be again tested on the MCA and progress can be determined. Otherwise, the groups did very well on Math tests. In the year 2000, the second grade was at the 80th percentile nationally, the fourth grade 70Th percentile nationally, the fifth grade outscored the state average on the MCA (1482 to 1470), and the sixth grade was at the 67th percentile nationally. All in all, this speaks very well of the present mathematics curriculum and teaching methodology at the school.

It appears as if the only concern for Southwest Star is to help the third grade group of 1999-2000, as individuals, increase their reading and math skills, and to continue to work on the 1999-2000 fourth graders' reading skills. The fact that so many of the students in the school are above average in basic skills proves that the school program is very capable of creating a good atmosphere for the continued growth of those skills.

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